Troublemakers and Troublebreakers:
An Ethnographic Study of the Shankill Road Community

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the surrounding environment, traumas and hope shape the Loyalist working-class area of the Shankill community in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The Shankill is a working-class area just outside the city centre, notorious for violence during the country's conflict, The Troubles. Data was gathered during ethnographic fieldwork in Spring 2022. The Shankill community is shaped in various ways: leftovers from The Troubles are particularly formative as the Peace Walls segregate the Protestant community from its Catholic neighbours with consequences that are deeply ingrained in its identity. This thesis investigates the material aspect of the Shankill and how it is formative of the community through the lens of place identity theory. The existence of hope in the adverse setting of the Shankill is investigated as a motivation to understand the actions of the younger generation of the community in the present for an uncertain future. It is concluded that the Shankill community is formed by physical and psychological remnants of its past as it struggles to deal with these issues in adverse circumstances in order to create its future.

Keywords: The Troubles, Northern Ireland, Violence, Trauma, Walls, Hope, Segregation, Belfast, Loyalism.

Table of Contents

Index and Map

ACT – Action for Community Transformation, grassroots organisation on the Shankill Road.

Alternatives – Grassroots organisation working with restorative justice, community cohesion, and education with offices Northern Ireland-wide.

CRA - Civil Rights Association.

Dissident Republican/Loyalist - Anti-government motivated individuals.

DUP - Democratic Unionist Party, political party, largest Unionist party and second largest party in Northern Ireland.

Interface - Physical barrier, used interchangeably with Peace Walls and Peace Lines.

IRA - Irish Republican Army, Republican paramilitary group.

Loyalist - Extreme Unionist, loyal to the British Crown and Union.

MLA - Member of the Legislative Assembly (locally elected Members of Parliament in Northern Ireland).

Nationalist – Political stance, a person who supports the idea of a united Ireland.

NBAP – North Belfast Area Project, youth work organisation working across North Belfast with centres throughout.

NI - Northern Ireland.

Orange – Orange Order, a Protestant cultural organisation, also a term used by some Protestants to describe their culture and heritage.

Peace Lines/Peace Walls – Interfaces separating Catholic and Protestant areas in Belfast, Derry~Londonderry, and Portadown.

PSNI - Police Service Northern Ireland, replacing the RUC after the Good Friday Agreement.

Republican - Extreme Nationalist.

ROI – Republic of Ireland.

RUC - Royal Ulster Constabulary, the name of the police in Northern Ireland before 1998, majority of recruits were Protestants.

Sinn Féin – Irish for 'we ourselves', Republican Political Party, largest party in Northern Ireland.

The Troubles – Civil conflict in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants starting in 1969 and ending with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

UDA - Ulster Defence Association, loyalist paramilitary group.

UDR - Ulster Defence Regiment, branch of the British Army with only Northern Irish recruits.

Ulster - Province of 9 counties in the North of Ireland, includes the 6 counties of Northern Ireland and 3 in the Republic of Ireland. Its use by Unionists symbolically refers to the 6 counties of Northern Ireland.

Unionist - Political stance, person who supports the union with the UK.

UVF - Ulster Volunteer Force, Loyalist paramilitary group.

12th July – An annual Protestant celebration commemorating the Battle of the Boyne and Protestant King William of Orange's victory over the Catholic King James II, also referred to as the twelfth.

Figure 1: Map of Shankill and surrounding areas. Map by authors.

1. Introduction

With its nearly 639,000 inhabitants Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland, makes up about 34% of the country's total population (Macrotrends, n.d.). As the biggest city in Northern Ireland, Belfast also has the country's highest concentration of so-called *Peace Lines*: walls made from metal fencing, plating and concrete, the highest ones towering eight metres over Belfast's residential areas (Goalwin, 2013). The Peace Lines were erected during The Troubles in an attempt to physically divide the predominantly Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods of Belfast. The most widely known Catholic Falls Road and the Protestant Shankill Road are separated by multiple interfaces. With some of the biggest Peace Lines built in the late 1960s, in their 60 years life span, these walls are still to this day serving their main purpose: dividing and protecting the respective neighbourhoods from rioting, hate crimes, vandalism and attacks carried out by dissidents and paramilitaries from the other side.

During our first trip to Belfast in February 2022 we did a Black Cab Tour, one of the city's most popular tourist attractions. These tours take you around the historical sites and areas of Belfast with the taxi driver guide giving you a brief introduction to the complexity of Northern Ireland's conflicted past through Peace Lines, murals, and memorial sites. We were sitting in the back of the black cab with the rain drizzling from the grey afternoon sky outside, down the misty windows. When we told our guide, Robert, about the academic purpose of our trip and our approach to the Peace Lines, he adjusted the rear-view mirror to look us in the eyes. With a serious expression Robert told us that we, and other fancy students of post-conflict areas, should try to live in our areas of study just for a short time before we in the slightest way can have an opinion on the purpose and importance of Belfast's Peace Lines and the aftermath of The Troubles.

In the realm of conflict and post-conflict studies many scholars have been criticised for having an overly simplistic approach to the notion of peace. In the traditional liberal understanding of peace, the concept is defined in its contrast to war and conflict, meaning that peace in a conflict area is achieved when the warring factions lay down arms and come to agreement, whether short or long term. Belfast is a clear example of this liberal understanding of peace, with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement ending the violence of The Troubles and establishing a relative peace and ceasefire between the Nationalist and Unionist factions (Goddard, 2012). But if we are to give voice to the critique of traditional liberal peacebuilding processes, we need to understand peace as a much more complex and contested concept. The oversimplification and bias of liberal peacebuilding and post-conflict studies becomes clear when put urban areas such as capitals in post-conflict societies into a micro-level perspective. Belfast serves as a good example of making a case of so-called urban peacebuilding. Liberal peacebuilding fails to take into consideration aspects of post-conflict trauma, unresolvedness, resentment, hate and guilt, especially when it comes to urban centres that generally have the highest density of ethno-national divides and groups. Urban centres such as capitals in conflict zones often serve as hotspots of the most violence and atrocities carried out in armed conflicts. Belfast is by no means an exception.

If we are to make sense of peacebuilding processes in post-conflict urban areas, we have to look at the unresolved complexities of urban peacebuilding. Put in the words of conflict studies professor, Annika Björkdahl:

> *"To build a self-sustainable peace in divided cities, [...], is far wider, deeper and more encompassing and involves a far greater array of actors, activities, levels of societies, links between societies, issues and time horizons than the international peacebuilding*

industry acknowledges and that the liberal peacebuilding research has overlooked. In fact, it involves a number of place-based and people-related processes such as mediating intergroup competition over territory and resources, constructing safe shared public spaces, limiting the spatial expression of Nationalist discourses, opening up the city and dismantling material barriers in order to build positive relationships, heal wounds, reconcile antagonistic differences, restore esteem, respect rights, meet basic needs, enhance equality, instil feelings of security and empower the disempowered." (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 211).

This paper will analyse how communities and community identity are formed in post-conflict societies. Through a combination of existing academic literature on the subject and ethnographic observations and interviews, we set out to understand how communities are shaped in post-conflict Belfast. Or more specifically in the Protestant neighbourhood of Shankill Road. We have chosen to focus on the impact of post-conflict and the material environment, such as memorial grounds, murals and the aforementioned Peace Walls. Complementing our research on post-conflict physicality, we will also use a temporal approach to show how time affects the perception and following consequences of ethno-national conflict. The Greater Shankill area was a hotspot for violence and terrorist attacks during The Troubles. In a socially engineered attempt to counteract the violence during the armed conflict, people were moved from their homes into what can be defined as religious ghettos (peacewall-archive, n. d.). The Shankill Road is an example of such, with its predominantly Protestant working-class residents.

This thesis begins with focus on how the Shankill community is formed around its proximity to Belfast's biggest Peace Wall. Running along Cupar Way, this Peace Wall divides the

Shankill area from the Catholic Falls Road by a few metres. The Peace Wall of Cupar Way is one of the most contested pieces of defensive architecture in the country. For many years it has been discussed by locals, academics, and politicians alike: what should be done with the Peace Walls of Northern Ireland? How does it affect communities and individuals to live in a segregated society? Is the time ripe for removal of the walls to once again mix the communities and move on? Or are the walls still a necessity in order to uphold the relative peace between the country's religious groups?

Voicing Björkdahl's critique of traditional liberal peacebuilding, we have chosen to take an ethnographic approach to our area of research, combined with theories analysing the challenges of post-conflict societies. We believe that, if we are to understand the complexity of post-conflict communities better, it is insufficient to base our research on existing literature on the subject. Our collected data has therefore been produced through ethnographic interviews and participant observation. Our interlocutors consist of a group stretching widely in terms of age, gender, class, and social background. We have chosen this in order to represent individuals who both live with the remembrance of the violence of The Troubles, and younger people who are born after The Good Friday Agreement, but still have been impacted by the conflict through narratives and collective memories often maintained by parents and older members of the community. As in any other post-conflict study, generational cohorts play a vital role in understanding trauma, remembrance and reconciliation (Creary & Byrne, 2014). Focus on generations is important if we are to include the temporal aspect of peacebuilding, which is a vital part of post-conflict studies.

Other than age and gender, we have also tried to select interlocutors from various social groups and backgrounds in order to take political and social power and authority into our

considerations. Some of our interlocutors are representatives from the Shankill's transformation organisations; institutions working to transform the community into a functioning and sustainable part of society. These representatives have proved to be of enormous value to our thesis as all of them hold great knowledge on the subject, both in local and academic terms. These individuals have also introduced us to a larger social network, making it easier for us to get in contact with the locals of The Greater Shankill. However, it should be remembered that these 'expert' representatives also hold a notion of power or authority, meaning that they may hold knowledge and 'top-down' opinions on the subject, through their everyday work. Though a valuable source of information, these representatives cannot be said to represent the average resident of The Shankill. We have therefore actively searched for, in lack of better words, 'common people' of the community. We made contact with these interlocutors through recreational facilities such as pubs, community groups and leisure centres. It is on the background of Björkdahl's statement, and Robert the guide's reprimand, that we voice the importance of including these individuals into our research. If we are to grasp as many nuances of the Shankill's identity as possible, we need not only to include individuals who work with transformation on an everyday level, but also people who live their everyday life within the community.

When researching a specific community inside a post-conflict society, it is of great importance to take notions of time and space into consideration. Time in these cases represents the period of the armed conflict, but it is also in the post-conflict period that we see new narratives and understandings of the conflict being shaped. Time therefore represents the trauma of the conflict, but also the process of healing and reconciliation, anger and regret (Björkdahl, 2013). The temporal aspect of post-conflict studies is therefore vital if we want to understand the transformation from a conflict area into a functioning and sustainable community.

The spatial aspect of analysing the Shankill is also of uttermost importance. Space represents the delimitation of our area of research. Solely due to the fact that the areas of Belfast are divided by walls, physical barriers found in space, we must therefore include space in our research (Gordillo, 2014). But space also encapsulates the visual part of the Shankill's identity. Everything from walls, to murals, to historical sites, are elements in reproducing a collective narrative and identity of the Shankill Road. These spatial elements are all a part of creating and maintaining a shared identity of Northern Ireland's Loyalist Protestant population by enhancing the notion of Britishness felt within the community. The spatial and material aspects of the Peace Walls are important in understanding the everyday life of segregated communities in post-conflict societies, as they separate and impose segregation upon the residents.

In trying to understand the collective identity in post-conflict communities through notions of time and space, and their relation to each other, we set out to answer how the identity of the Shankill is formed around spatial aspects of architecture, remembrance and tragedy, and temporal acts of memory, forgetting, and forgiveness performed in the interaction between generations. It is not sufficient to analyse these elements in isolation. To better understand how the community of the Shankill is formed, we need not only to analyse these elements in-depth, but also to understand them in relation and perspectivation to each other. We must take into consideration the conflicted and contested past of Northern Ireland's religious and political groups and the psychical leftovers from The Troubles in forms of Peace Walls and other symbols of the conflict still defining the visual expression of Belfast. This will be the purpose of this paper, to which we have concentrated in the following problem statement: *How is the Shankill community shaped by its surrounding environment in the wake of The Troubles?*

The following sub-questions will guide our analysis:

- How does the material environment and segregation affect the community in the Shankill?

- How do trauma and memory divide and connect generations in the Shankill?

- How does hope motivate the younger generation of the Shankill into action?

This paper is contextualised by The Troubles, as we investigate how the recent history of Northern Ireland has impacted the formation of the community of the Shankill Road in West Belfast. The following context chapter gives the reader a brief introduction to the relevant historical framework which has shaped the Shankill community. A literature review will give the reader insight into existing literature on the topic which is relevant to this research and will shine light on the gaps in research that this paper will attempt to fill. The methodology chapter introduces our approach to ethnographic research and the combination of theories that will be used to analyse our data in order to answer the research question. The theory section presents the theoretical frameworks which are used to analyse our data in the most conducive way. The analysis section delves into our ethnographic findings in conjunction with the relevant theoretical lenses of space and time. The paper closes with a conclusion which concretises our findings and offers points for further discussion and generalisations on the topic.

2. Context

This chapter will introduce the context of the Shankill, including the history of Northern Ireland, The Troubles and the Shankill today.

2.1 Northern Ireland Divided and the Beginning of The Troubles

Northern Ireland is historically a deeply segregated society since its creation in 1921 (Rose, 2000). Divisions between the Catholic and Protestant communities predate Northern Ireland's establishment, centuries before, since the arrival of the British and the beginnings of the Plantation of Ulster and British colonisation (Muldoon, 2004, pp. 457-458). The divisions of Northern Irish society can be seen most clearly in the microcosm of the capital city of Belfast. Protestants and Catholics have inhabited distinctly separate areas throughout the country's history becoming more and more segregated during The Troubles. Several areas gained infamy during The Troubles, one of which being the Shankill Road, the focus of this thesis.

The Troubles, Northern Ireland's civil conflict, began in 1969 with protests led by the Civil Rights Association (CRA) in Derry~Londonderry. The goal of the movement was to secure equal rights for all citizens of Northern Ireland, following a long period of discrimination against the Catholic population in regards such as housing, gerrymandering, employment, and education amongst other socio-economic issues (Muldoon, 2004, p. 459). The first protests had the intentions of being peaceful, but violence sparked after clashes with the Royal Ulster Constabulary and infiltration from groups with ulterior motives such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), among other more political organisations. Violence spread from here across the country, igniting underlying tensions between Catholics and Protestants and sparking resentment between neighbours who had been living relatively peacefully alongside each other prior to

this. The British Army entered the streets of Northern Ireland with the intention of restoring peace within months, they would stay until 1998. British intervention in turn escalated clashes of violence. This 30 year long conflict would define Northern Ireland's existence and claim thousands of lives from both Catholic and Protestant communities (Rose, 2000).

2.2 Segregation of Belfast

During the first year of The Troubles, as sectarian attacks and violent clashes spread across the country, much of the violence was seen in cities such as Derry~Londonderry and Belfast. Relative residential separation of Protestant and Catholic communities already existed in Northern Ireland, but this intensified in the first and second years of the conflict. Catholics living in predominantly Protestant areas and vice versa faced intimidation as well as encouragement from the British forces to move to areas populated by residents of their own religions (Rose, 2000). Feldman cites the recollections of a woman who lived in a mixed area in West Belfast before the beginning of The Troubles and how the outbreak of violence incited hatred between two communities which had been mixed beforehand: *"In my opinion there is too much hatred now. There hasn't been a family that hasn't suffered on both sides of the fence"* (Feldman, 1991, p. 23). The result was a deeply segregated Northern Ireland, spanning from small villages becoming home to almost completely one religion to the larger towns and cities, which now had areas which were completely Catholic or Protestant. This movement of people has been evaluated as one of the largest population movements in Europe since the end of the Second World War (Feldman, 1991, p. 23). When looking at the example of the Catholic Falls Road and the adjacent Protestant Shankill Road, this is wholly evident. These two areas became homogeneous in population despite being metres away from each other. Both relatively working-class areas, which had been struck by deprivation and unemployment with the downturn of the linen and shipbuilding industries, were pitted against each other in an

ideological and religious conflict. In the case of the Shankill, social deprivation is directly impacted by the conflict and the following civil unrest. The deprived Falls and the Shankill both gained universal notoriety for rioting and violence during The Troubles. As Creary and Byrne put it:

"Inequalities and deprivations fuelled instances of ethnic and sectarian hostility wherein cultural violence, those aspects of culture such as symbols, art, flags, and parades, was used to justify and legitimize direct and structural violence in an ethnopolitically divided Northern Ireland." (Creary & Byrne, 2014, p. 224)

This period of violence between close neighbours led to the erection of barricades between streets and to what are known today as the Peace Lines or Peace Walls. These were intended to be a temporary solution but have defined Belfast's cityscape for over 50 years, with over 27 Peace Lines erected in Belfast after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 (Belfast Interface Project, 2017, p. 10). The Peace Lines were built to protect and separate the communities that lived side by side. Several of the larger walls have gates which are controlled by either the council, the police service, or private security firms to close at specific times agreed upon with residents who live by the interface (Department of Justice Interface Programme, n.d.). According to Belfast Interface Project's report in 2017, there are 97 barriers across Belfast dividing Catholics and Protestants (Belfast Interface Project, 2017, p. 5).

2.3 The Shankill Road

The Shankill Road is one of West Belfast's arterial roads spanning outwards from the city centre. A historically working class and Protestant area, the community has strong links to Belfast's once booming linen and ship building industries. After the beginning of The Troubles

with increasing segregation, both physical and social, the community gained a reputation from the outside world of being one of violence and sectarianism, not dissimilar to the neighbouring Falls Road community. Many men in the Shankill joined paramilitary groups such as the UDA and UVF with the intention of protecting their community. Paramilitary action and sectarianism are still very much alive today in the Shankill, as incidents since the Good Friday Agreement have shown (Trumbore, 2018). After the ceasefire and the decline of The Troubles as a full scale violent political struggle, paramilitaries on both sides fought to maintain their power by channelling their efforts into more organised crime such as violent vigilante justice and drug dealing. The UVF-UDA feud of the early 2000s caused a divide within the Shankill area as the paramilitaries engaged in a power struggle. The UVF dominated the Upper Shankill and the UDA controlled the lower Shankill (McDonald, 2000). Residents were forced to flee their homes as violence and shootings spilled onto the streets; the Shankill retained its notoriety as a dangerous place to be.

In an area with such segregation and reputation, it could be described as isolated. Separation of the two religious communities meant that they began to view their own community as completely different to the other, despite experiencing similar levels of deprivation and violence (Feldman, 1991, p. 20). Divisions in a cultural and historical sense also helped to consolidate the idea that the Protestant and Catholic communities were very different from each other. In the most simplistic and normative descriptions Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist culture can be seen as fixated around allegiance to the British Crown, the union with the UK, British military service, the Orange Order, and marching parades celebrating Protestant heritage, to name a few examples. On the other hand, Catholic/Nationalist/Republican culture can be perceived as centred around Irish language, Gaelic sports, the struggle for a united Ireland, and

opposition to British rule to mention a few basic points (Muldoon, 2004, p. 457). These communities were juxtaposed by both their differences and their closeness in proximity.

2.4 The Good Friday Agreement and The Shankill Today

The Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 ended The Troubles in a legislative sense. The main points of the Agreement were the recognition of both Unionist and Nationalist identities and cultures within Northern Ireland and the Republic, the creation of a legislative assembly with power sharing between Unionists and Nationalists, equal rights and opportunities for all Northern Irish citizens, the ceasefire and the decommissioning of arms by paramilitary groups and the removal of British forces from Northern Ireland, the replacement of the RUC with the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI) with the aim of equal recruitment, and the release of all political prisoners (The Belfast Agreement, 1998). The agreement was a compromise on the aims of both sides but brought peace to Northern Ireland after 30 years of conflict. Over the years Republicans and Loyalists have become increasingly unhappy with the implementation of the peace process.

The Shankill Road's community is defined by its collective experience of The Troubles and by its separation from the rest of the city; this legacy still is very apparent there today. The population of the Shankill was 70,000 at the beginning of the conflict and has declined by around 50,000 people (Moore et al., 1995): the population stands at 18,985 as of 2019 (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency [NISRA], n.d). The Shankill remains as one of Northern Ireland's most deprived areas with high unemployment rates, dereliction, lack of education, and high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. The surrounding areas of the Shankill such as Protestant Woodvale and Highfield, and Catholic Ardoyne, New Lodge, and Springfield Road are also rated as the areas in Northern Ireland which are most deprived (NISRA, 2017). According to the most recent census in 2011, 51.8% of the population of the

Greater Shankill Area had no qualifications and 47.1% (NISRA, 2019) of the area's population were economically inactive in comparison to the national rate of 22.2% (NISRA, 2019) in the same period. The combination of these factors of deprivation leads to paramilitary recruitment, anti-social behaviour in youth, and dissidence within the working-class communities of West Belfast and in particular in Loyalist communities such as the Shankill (Creary & Byrne, 2014, p. 222).

Events over the past couple of years have reflected the Shankill's deprived status. Brexit, political stagnation, COVID-19, and increasingly difficult economic circumstances have blighted the community in a way disproportional to the rest of the country. Northern Ireland reached its centenary in 2021, and what should have been a celebration for a proud Loyalist community was shrouded in disappointment with their status within the union and served as a reminder of political neglect of the working-class Loyalist areas. Les Allamby, the chief commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, was quoted in The Guardian in 2021:

> *"Six years ago the high court ruled that the NI executive's failure to adopt an anti-poverty strategy was unlawful, yet six years on this has not been remedied. The lack of a future for some young people means they remain fertile ground for recruitment by Loyalist and dissident Republican paramilitaries"* (Duncan et al., 2021).

Deprivation and neglect in the working-class Shankill Road continue to breed dissidence and social disorder.

Northern Ireland's political landscape is rigidly two-sided within the structure of power sharing which was established under the Good Friday Agreement. The Catholic vote is captured by the Republican party of Sinn Féin, whereas the Protestant community's vote is split by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), and the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV). The Unionist parties in general are aligned with traditional and middle-class values, meaning that working class Protestant areas, such as the Shankill, have little to no representation on the political spectrum. Northern Ireland historically votes tribally, so Protestants and Catholics alike will vote for parties which do not necessarily represent them or hold their values in so that the vote will not be split, and the party of the other religion will be less likely to gain a majority (Rose, 2000).

The UK voted to leave the EU in 2016, however Northern Ireland voted in to remain. Cross-referencing maps of Brexit voting (BBC, 2016) and of religion in Northern Ireland (The Detail, n.d.) shows that in the areas with the majority of the population identifying as Protestant, the majority of voters voted for Brexit. The feeling among Unionists was that leaving the EU would strengthen ties between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK and distance them from European Ireland. In the period since then, this vision has not been realised as Northern Ireland continues to pose an enormous problem for the UK's exit from the EU, as its links to the Republic of Ireland are tied up within the Good Friday Agreement, and issues with the border prevail. Unionists and Loyalists are fearful of increasing support for a border poll in the coming years and of Protocol 16 (Campbell, 2022) which means that goods can pass freely across the border from the Republic of Ireland to the North whereas goods entering Northern Ireland from the UK are now subject to checks upon entry. The Protocol also means that Northern Ireland remains within the EU's single market effectively creating a border between Northern Ireland and the UK in the Irish Sea (Campbell, 2022). This led to disillusion in areas such as the

Shankill and sparked violence as the Loyalist population, who see themselves as inherently British, were disregarded once again by Westminster.

Belfast once again saw violence throughout Spring 2021, specifically around the Lanark Way interface at the top of the Shankill Road. The protocol was said to be the cause of the rioting as embittered Loyalists took to the streets to voice their opposition to how Brexit was being carried out. Many locals interviewed stated that the violence was reminiscent of the early 1970s (The News Letter, 2021). However, after continued violence and condemnation from Unionist politicians, residents from the locality, and in general from Northern Ireland's population, it was evident that this discontent ran much deeper than the guise of Brexit (McDermott, 2021). After continued rioting it was widely acknowledged that the trigger was a culmination of factors widespread in the deprived areas of North and West Belfast: disaffected youth, dereliction, political neglect, lack of education and employment. The majority of the rioters were young people who felt these factors deeply and personally and thus took to the streets in want of action or in boredom or craving for excitement. Creary and Byrne point out that the act of youth anti-social behaviour and rioting has been a big part of political unrest in Northern Ireland since The Troubles (Creary & Byrne, 2014). Media attention was once again focused on these Loyalist areas of Belfast in a wholly negative light, igniting the feeling that Loyalism was deeply linked to social dissidence and violence and thus meaning that the general antipathy towards the Shankill impedes the positive grassroots change for the community that some members are working towards.

In order to comprehend the complexity of the Shankill community today it is important to understand that it is inherently shaped by its past and community trauma of The Troubles. It is a working-class area that is largely ignored on a political level as a result of the domination of

Unionist politics by the middle class, which in turn means a severe lack of funding for housing, education, and community development despite being an area that is in desperate need of regeneration and attention. Just a short walk along the Shankill Road will prove this; numerous derelict sites, dilapidated houses and shopfronts, and streets strewn with litter. The sense of abandonment does not go unnoticed by its residents which is seen in outbursts of violence and rioting and lack of political engagement.

Picture 1: Side street off Cupar Way. Picture by authors.

3. Literature Review

The topical literature that has been used in the making of this thesis consists of a broad array of subjects, including post-conflict studies. The different bodies of literature that will feature throughout this project have been carefully analysed and selected due to their relevance to the problem statement. By making use of existing academic literature on post-conflict societies, and more specifically post-conflict Belfast, we have gained well-founded knowledge on the topic. Basing our knowledge on many topical nuances has proven to be vital, as urban peacebuilding and post-conflict transformation is very complex and contested as a field of study.

As an introduction into post-conflict study, we have used the article "Urban Peacebuilding" by Swedish professor in Political Science Annika Björkdahl. Björkdahl's article has served as our view into what factors are present in transforming a post-conflict society into a functioning society of peace times. Björkdahl argues that if we are to make this transformation as effective as possible, we must bear in mind that urban peacebuilding, in its contrast to traditional liberal peacebuilding, is complex, as notions of history, politics, demography, and geography all play an important role. It is Björkdahl's conclusion that post-conflict communities must actively engage in cross-community interaction, backed and financed by political force and social focus on the effects of urban conflict (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 220).

In our research of the Shankill community we have also found it important to bear in mind Northern Ireland's contested history and current political situation. In gaining knowledge on this, we have amongst others made use of "Youth Violence as Accidental Spoiling?: Civil Society Perceptions of the Role of Sectarian Youth Violence and the Effect of the Peace Dividend in Northern Ireland" by Patlee Creary and Sean Byrne, " 'The Movement Moves

Against You': Spoiler Management in the Northern Ireland Peace Process" by Peter F. Trumbore, "The Art of War: Instability, Insecurity, and Ideological Imagery in Northern Ireland's Political Murals, 1979 - 1998" by Gregory Goalwin, and "Brokering Peace: Networks, Legitimacy, and the Northern Ireland Peace Process" by Stacie E. Goddard. These are just to mention a few of the multiple articles that sets the historical and political frame, from where we can start to analyse the post-conflict identity of Shankill Road. Combining information from these articles lets us into the realm of the community, where the historical past is undeniably the founding stones of the community's narrative and identity.

Anthropologist David Scott's book *Omens of Adversity: Tragedy, Time, Memory, Justice* also plays an important role in this thesis. Here Scott shows how time affects conflict by diving into the Grenada Revolution of 1979. By combining historical documents, past research, testimonies, and fiction literature about the revolution, Scott demonstrates how historical events of war and conflict are constantly influenced by temporal past, present, and future (Scott, 2014, pp. 5-9). As individuals move through time, historical events of the past are shifting in meaning, perception, and narrative. This is among other factors because time's inevitable impact forces individuals with first-hand experience of conflict to give way to individuals that have no direct memory of conflict. These latter individuals urge to make sense of their historical past by seeing through new lenses and daring to touch historical events of the conflict that the older individuals couldn't overcome due to collective or national trauma. *Omens of Adversity* has therefore been vital to this thesis, as it offers theoretical tools to understand war and conflict through time.

Studying violence and segregation in Belfast, we found it important to include literature about this topic specifically in Belfast, as its sectarian violence is of a unique kind. To give us insight

into these matters and to guide our analysis, we used Allen Feldman's book *Formations of Violence* (1991) which traces the constructions and forms of violence in segregated Belfast to explain how the current patterns of violence, fear, and prejudice were shaped at that time, through the lens of spatiality and the body. Feldman's argument of the construct of the 'interface'/'sanctuary' has been a great insight into how violence in Belfast is channelled into specific forms and areas, and how segregation produces specific forms of violence. Peter Shirlow and Brendan Murtagh's book *Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City* (2006) was illuminating regarding what segregation does to the divided communities in terms of fear, prejudice, and distrust. They argue that segregation by the Peace Walls reproduces itself, by making the interface areas contested areas, that legitimises the violence which further justifies the need for segregation. These two books have been essential in understanding the nature of sectarian violence and segregation in Belfast, and the consequences of this. To further understand the way people ascribe meaning to places and to investigate how that forms communities and individuals, Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira's article "Place Identity: A Central Concept in Understanding Intergroup Relationships in the Urban Context" (2012) was enlightening. In this article, the authors develop the concept of 'place identity', based on Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory and Self Categorisation Theory, and investigate the importance of place in people's identity. Furthermore, they set out a framework for how to utilise this concept in research by looking at identification levels with a place, intergroup differentiation, and ingroup homogeneity.

Orla Muldoon's article "Children of the Troubles: The Impact of Political Violence in Northern Ireland" (2004) was particularly important, set alongside Feldman's historical text in a more contemporary context. Muldoon analyses the impact of The Troubles post-Good Friday Agreement on children growing up in Northern Ireland at that time. The article offers useful

insight into the problems that youth face as a result of continuing trauma and the impact that this could potentially have on the future of Northern Irish society.

Belfast Interface Project's 2017 report, "Interface Barriers, Peacelines and Defensive Architecture" offers a visual compilation of all interfaces that exist in Northern Ireland at the time of writing. Nowhere else does this collection of information on Peace Walls exist in one place. The report offers both maps and pictures of the interfaces, sectioned into geographical clusters and accredits those responsible for building and maintaining them. It also includes information on when the barriers were built and on those that have been removed. This report was useful in the geographical delimitation of our field of research and to gain a greater visual understanding of the extent of physical segregation in Northern Ireland.

Australian Anthropologist Ghassan Hage's *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (2003) gave great insight into the concept of hope in the context of his home country. Against the backdrop of the rise of nationalism, he argues that people's worries and fears about threats to their attachment to their nation can be a form of hope. Although nationalism and the state can stamp out this hope, if a society is 'caring' then it can motivate people to hope for it and distribute hope within it. This was very relevant to the context of the Shankill as its residents care deeply for it and are motivated to hope for it but also feel as though their identity and attachment to their nation is constantly under threat. He also explains the existence of hope in adverse situations as it is a human trait to hope when all seems hopeless. In the context of the Shankill, this also helps to understand the existence of hope in adversity and the actions that it motivates.

Simon Turner's "'We Wait for Miracles': Ideas of Hope and Future among Clandestine Burundian Refugees in Nairobi" (2015) was formative for the theoretical framework on hope. Turner argues that Burundian refugees experience different forms of hope, both in waiting and being active in forming their future. He analyses how the location and temporal setting for the refugees can form hope: being in the relative security of a refugee camp does not allow individual hope for the future to flourish but actions within the camp do express hope such as going to lessons and taking part in military training. However this hope is linked to the past and returning to Burundi in order to improve it when the time is right. In contrast the refugees that move to the city live life in much uncertainty, and this forms hope and defines their actions in working towards a better future for themselves. This was useful to apply to the liminal space in which the youth of the Shankill live and to better understand their actions in relation to being hopeful. He also discusses concepts such as utopian hope which can be hijacked by the state for its own good, and collective hope in which individuals work together for a communal ideal in the future. These concepts were also applicable to the situation in the Shankill as we analyse their collective hope and actions towards that.

4. Methodology and Research Methods

In this section, our methodology to answer our research question is explained. The choice of research methods is described and justified along with details about the specific research methods. Furthermore, information about our fieldwork in Belfast is elaborated on alongside reflections on access, methods and ethical consideration.

4.1 Why do Ethnographic Fieldwork?

In our project we chose to answer our research question through ethnographic fieldwork, as we were interested in how people lived in and experienced post-conflict society. As Wittgenstein argues, the meaning of a word is not in the lexicon, but in the use of the word (Wittgenstein, 1958, §43). Here, we are interested in the use, the individual meanings and understandings, and how people express their reality. Furthermore, Anthropologist James Spradley points out the importance of obtaining ethnographic data inside the cultural realm of one's interlocutors, if one is to avoid dangers of misinterpretations and oversimplification through cultural differentiation (Spradley, 1979).

We chose to do fieldwork for several reasons; one being that the area of interest (Shankill in Belfast) is an area with a troubled past. The value of doing fieldwork, compared to other methods, is that you observe and take into account not only what people say, but also their actions, behaviour, and environment. It is possible, by spending time with people and immersing yourself in their lives, one gets a glimpse into the tacit knowledge and more bodily experiences of a person and a community (Goffmann, 1989, p. 125). This tacit knowledge and these experiences can inform your later work. Through common experiences and conversation you discover the appropriate questions to ask during later interviews or informal conversations. This in turn also informs your later analysis (Cohen, 1988, p. 225).

"I think you had to live it to understand why people did what they did, living in a community like this" (Marge, 2022, [00:11:22]). As several of our informants told us, and as stated in the introduction, it is seen as difficult for outsiders to understand how it is living close to the Peace Lines, in the Shankill, and through The Troubles. They mention that it is easy coming with a higher education from outside the Shankill, saying that the walls should be taken down and the past forgiven. Doing ethnographic fieldwork gives us an idea of how it is to be living in the area, which takes the researcher closer to their point of view. We acknowledge that it will never let us experience what they did, but it will help develop an understanding. This is the goal and the strength of ethnography.

4.2 Methods

Several methods were used in this project, including semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, participant observation, and photography. Many unrecorded, unscripted, and informal conversations were had with locals living in the area. In order to gather data covering most nuances of the topic, we chose interlocutors from a wide range of social signifiers such as age, gender, social class and education.

Participant observation is a useful method when doing fieldwork for extended periods. Doing fieldwork is more than interviews and taking pictures. Time is spent on 'observing' and 'participating' in various degrees in the daily life of the people under study. Being with people, talking, or 'hanging out' while observing and recording impressions is part of participant observation. Participant observation has been called a paradox and a mystery, and has no general agreed on definition. Dewalt and Dewalt argue that it is one method amongst several in anthropology, and includes both observation, participation and recording of the information gathered. By participating in daily activities, rituals, and events of the people being studied,

one can learn about tacit and explicit aspects of their life and culture (Dewalt & Dewalt, 1998, p. 259-260). A difference between the people studied and the researcher is that the latter has to consciously observe and record while participating in the activities. Three points are common among most theories on participant observation:

"(1) We can learn from observation (keeping in mind that the observer becomes a part of what is being observed); (2) Being actively engaged in the lives of people brings the ethnographer closer to understanding the participants' point of view; and (3) Achieving understanding of people and their behaviour is possible." (Dewalt & Dewalt, 1998, p. 261)

These points form the necessary epistemological background for knowing and theorising from data gathered through participant observation (Dewalt & Dewalt, 1998, p. 261). By participating, observing, talking, and recording you can gain knowledge about what the right questions to ask are during a more structured interview (Cohen, 1988, pp. 225-226). Furthermore, doing participant observation is both a tool and a goal in establishing rapport, which is essential in later interviews (Dewalt & Dewalt, 1998, p. 267).

Knowledge between the interviewer and the interlocutor is created in the interview situation. The data produced in an interview is a production from both the interlocutor and the ethnographer. The purpose is to gather qualitative descriptions of the interlocutor's worldview, ideas and experiences for later interpretation of its meaning. The ethnographic interview shares the same epistemological basis as participant observation: that ethnographers can learn from listening to people and asking questions, and this knowledge can lead to an understanding of the interlocutor's worldview. An ethnographic interview is a specific speech event and different

from friendly conversations or a therapeutic session, but at times also draws on elements from speech concepts such as these (Spradley, 1979). It has a more or less clear agenda, where the interviewer wants to hear about the interlocutor's experiences and thoughts. The interaction is not symmetrical, as the interviewer defines the situation and guides the conversation towards topics of interest. The degree of guidance depends on the style of interview (Kvale, 1997, pp. 3-5 & 129-130). In this project, semi-structured interviews were carried out. An interview guide was used that had room for letting the interlocutor steer the conversation into realms that they found interesting or important, while still following a string of questions formulated beforehand. The ethnographer asks questions to guide the interlocutor into spheres of interest to the ethnographer (Spradley, 1979, p. 59). In ethnography, rapport refers to a harmonious relationship between ethnographer and interlocutor. It is important to establish rapport to let the interview and information flow smoothly, and so the situation does not seem like a hostile interrogation. Good rapport sets the interlocutor at ease and gives positive feelings about the situation and the interviewer which provides space for honesty. This is especially important when getting into personal or difficult topics (Spradley, 1979, p. 78).

The situation and dynamics are different in a focus group than in an individual interview. The role of the ethnographer is different. The ethnographer still has to conduct the interview, ask questions, listen and take notes, but to a larger extent, they have to be a moderator. This includes handling the social dynamics in the group and making sure that everyone has their say. The biggest difference between the single interview and focus group, is that in a focus group the interlocutors address each other and discuss between themselves, which can lead to contrasting points of view in a group that would not be apparent from a single perspective. Furthermore, often a group consensus is formed during a focus group interview, which is another interesting point of interpretation later in the process (Halkier, 2002).

4.3 Our Methodology

This section describes our methodology, including how we collected our empirical material, how we got access to the Shankill community, our position as researchers, ethical considerations in researching post-conflict societies, and closes with our analysis strategy.

4.3.1 Data Collection

Our ethnographic fieldwork consisted of two trips to Belfast spanning February and March 2022. The former excursion was focused on establishing contact with key informants and experts and getting a feeling of the area we were to study. We explored the Shankill, and the surrounding areas and took a Black Cab Tour to get a general introduction to the area. Furthermore, we met with a Ph.D. student that was studying a similar field to us. He introduced us to certain difficulties studying the Shankill and shared ideas on how to gain access. The main part of our fieldwork was conducted on the latter trip. During this stay we spent days in the Shankill Road area doing participant observation, walking the area, talking with local people, photographing and conducting interviews. During this time we made five individual interviews and two focus group interviews, ranging in length from about 40 minutes to two hours. Furthermore, we participated in the Shankill ACT Women's Group meeting including breakfast, had a tour of ACT, a centre for community building, and had several walks along the Peace Lines dividing the Protestant and Catholic communities. In addition, we had several informal chats and discussions with business owners, bartenders and locals on the street.

4.3.1.1 Introduction to Interlocutors

Our interlocutors are from a range of different backgrounds. We deliberately attempted to establish contact with people from different backgrounds, such as the local pensioners,

activists, younger people and people with higher education. This was done in order to get a more detailed, diverse, and encompassing view of the Shankill community. Homer and Abe are both pensioners and lived through The Troubles. Abe was an ex-army and UDR serviceman responding to the bombings during The Troubles and took part in the Falkland Wars. We met Homer in the Ranger's Club Bar, and Abe in the Mountainview Tavern during our first days in the Shankill. We fell in conversation with them, and they agreed to do interviews. The contact to the ACT Initiative Women's Group was established with help from our key contact, Moe, an ex-combatant who served prison time in his youth for paramilitary activity. Now a Ph.D. and founder of a community transformation group called ACT. Carl, who participated in a focus group interview, was also an ex-political prisoner. This group surrounding ACT and the ACT Women's Group represent a more activist and community-focused part of the Shankill, that work actively to better the area from a bottom-up approach.

Bart and Maggie were young and worked in NBAP, an organisation focusing on education and mental health among younger people in the area. Bart was the only Catholic person we interviewed which gave us a limited insight into the Catholic community. They were born after the Good Friday Agreement and did not live through The Troubles. Lisa was working in Alternatives, an organisation working with restorative justice in the area. The difference to this organisation is that this was more focused on helping people out of paramilitarism by restorative justice.

With this material we have a wide age spectrum from around 20 to 70 years old and several different jobs, educational backgrounds and social groups. A characteristic that runs through most is that they live in the Shankill (with the exception of Bart) and that most define themselves as Loyalist Protestants.

4.3.2 Access

Establishing rapport is an important part of access. According to Dewalt and Dewalt rapport is achieved when informants and researchers come to a point, where each is committed to helping the other and are sharing the same goals to some extent (1998, p. 268). In our situation, the goal for us was gathering material to illuminate our research purposes and get an understanding of the Shankill community. For our informants, the goal was to provide this material by telling their story, hoping that we would provide a respectful and nuanced narrative on a community that feels politically underrepresented and not publicly heard and understood. This feeling of underrepresentedness was to our advantage, as most people we interacted with were open to tell their story and willing to do an interview.

We used two complementary techniques for access to the community. The first being simply chatting with people, and if they seemed interested, to ask for an interview. This was done in pubs in the Shankill, as pubs are a common meeting place for many locals. First we would ask the bartender, whether it was agreeable to conduct an interview with their customers and if they could point out subjects that might be willing to do one. We would then approach the possible interlocutor, present ourselves and our project, and following some small talk, we would ask for an interview. This approach never failed to work. The other approach was contacting NGOs and other organisations working in the area. Through them we would get in contact with a key-informant that could direct us to the organisation's volunteers, groups or events. This happened for example with the director of ACT, who we met several times and had several informal conversations with. He introduced us to the ACT Women's Group, who we met with and interviewed. The two approaches are complementary in the way that they open up for two different kinds of informants. The ones volunteering in community groups may be different

from the ones frequenting the pubs. Using both approaches help us to get a more full and saturated understanding of the locals in the Shankill.

4.3.3 Positioning

The researcher is not just a fly on the wall when doing fieldwork. In ethnography, the researcher is the medium, the recorder and interpreter of the world. This means that the ethnographer's background, gender, age and personality influence how they perceive the world and how people interact with them (Cohen, 1988, pp. 221-222). The researcher is furthermore informed by theory, political view, historical, and cultural background. Our positioning in the Shankill had several layers. To most interlocutors we were seen as outsiders that spent some time in the area. Our sympathetic approach and the fact that we had knowledge on the history of Belfast and The Troubles did open some doors into a more emic perspective where the interlocutors sensed that we had an understanding of the issues and could go more in depth during the conversation. One of the researchers in the project grew up in Northern Ireland which also gave some sympathy and insight. The negative aspect of this seemingly emic perspective was that some parts may have been lost, as the interlocutors took knowledge for granted that we might not know about. We met interlocutors several times, which is a way to get access; through personal relations. We told the interlocutors that we were interested in hearing their stories about the Peace Walls and community in general, which might have lent itself to the impression that they could circulate a positive story about the community through us.

4.3.4 Ethical Considerations

When conducting ethnographic research ethical considerations must always be at the centre of the research process; through the delimitation of the field of study and construction of a

research question, through the data collection process, through the analysis and writing. Ethics should be embedded in all stages.

In the context of the Shankill, an area which has suffered a long and troubled past and is still existing in the aftermath today, we were careful in our choice to study one community in isolation and to approach the data collection with care. Before our research trip we studied the history of The Troubles and the Shankill area in depth but remained aware of our ignorance and academic distance to the subject matter. As alluded to in the introduction and methodology section, several of the people we met expressed that to fully understand the Shankill you have to actually live there and have experienced it; this was a point we carried with us throughout this project.

We strived to remain aware of our own positionality as outsiders and as academics. In our research group we all come from a Protestant background: two Danes who are culturally Protestant and did not grow up in a religious background and one Northern Irishwoman who grew up in a religiously Protestant setting. Selecting the Protestant community as our area of study appeared to us, after much consideration, more of an ethical choice as we are, in normative terms, coming from the same religious standpoint and access could be less of an offensive issue. Although being Northern Irish and Protestant does leave one closer to the subject matter in a sense but coming from the relatively peaceful and mixed west of the country gives objective distance but did allow interlocutors to speak of events, organisations, and history which otherwise would have needed more explanation during the interview period. This also gave interlocutors a level of comfort in speaking to a compatriot.

During the formulation of our interview guide and data collection process we kept in mind the guiding principles of ethical ethnographic work as outlined by Spradley (Spradley, 1979). In considering informants first it is important to remember that informants' lives are intertwined with others (Spradley, 1979, p. 35), whether it be gatekeepers or other informants etc., informants must be viewed as individuals as their views can differ and stand alone from those of other parties who hold interest in this research. We were mindful of the power dynamics that could be at play when using a gatekeeper to gain access to informants. Marcia Espinoza delves into this issue as she reflects on her own fieldwork experience (Espinoza, 2020). She brings forward the ethical dilemmas when using gatekeepers to gain access to refugees as sometimes she would be provided with contact information of refugees who were not aware that NGOs were sharing their details: *"I was reflexive about the reproduction of power dynamics by approaching the organizations first"* (Espinoza, 2020, p. 248). This was cautionary to us as we approached Moe, the co-founder of ACT who put us in contact with the ACT Women's Group and several individuals. However, in this situation Moe contacted the informants first asking their consent if they wanted us to speak to them. On a couple of occasions we were present for the vocal and friendly consent as they clearly had a close relationship to Moe and were interested in participating in research that he found valid and useful.

Spradley's explanation on safeguarding informants' rights, interests, and sensitivities is very relevant in this research. It is necessary to examine the implications of research which could be unforeseen to informants (Spradley, 1979, p. 36). In the context of the Shankill Road, this is very important as the area still has active paramilitaries and sectarian violence. One of our informants expressed that she faces abuse daily online because of her Loyalist identity. Other informants were former members of paramilitary groups and British forces. Against the background of The Troubles this is closely linked to another poignant point outlined by

Spradley of protecting the privacy of informants (Spradley, 1979, p. 37). People can be subject to abuse or violent retaliation for expressing certain views. This is why we chose to anonymise all our interviews. Abe was the only informant who wished to be anonymous. However, in this context and to protect our informants from backlash of any sort we decided anonymity was necessary, so pseudonyms are in place to protect their identity. We also decided not to include any information that our informants shared with us about their involvement in specific events which involved sectarianism or activity during The Troubles. It is difficult to maintain complete anonymity in such a small and close-knit community, especially because it is a geographically small field of research and place/street names are integral to parts of the analysis process and the reader's understanding of the topic. We also asked for consent to record the interviews and explained that the data was for our use only and would be destroyed after the writing process was completed.

Another must in Spradley's ideals of ethnographic research is communicating research objectives to informants. It is true that *"informants have the right to know the ethnographer's aims"* (Spradley, 1979, p. 36) and this also gave us many positive interactions with interlocutors. We gave an explanation of what we were researching, what type of questions we would be asking, and a disclaimer that if the informant did not want to answer a particular question then that was of no issue to us; we aimed to make them as comfortable as possible during the interview process. In the Shankill, the locals have experienced many researchers who were focused on The Troubles. However, when we explained that we were interested in their community in particular, interlocutors became more open, friendly, and willing to talk to us. They were pleasantly taken aback that their community was at the centre of our study and what we were interested in was their opinions, feelings, and experiences of living in the Greater Shankill. Following the advice of Spradley, *"[...] the ethnographer, in consultation with*

informants, must be willing to direct the investigation into paths suggested by informants" (Spradley, 1979, p. 37), we were able to lead the interview into more interesting ways and topics than we initially anticipated. This also meant that we could develop our interview guide in real time and after the first interviews we had, as our research unfolded, and we could get closer to specific details of the Shankill community.

Not exploiting informants was also a necessity of Spradley's that we took into account during our research. The informants should not suffer during the research process and should get something out of it themselves (Spradley, 1979, p. 38). We were mindful when creating our interview guide not to pose any intrusive questions regarding The Troubles. However, this was a subject that many informants brought up themselves without prompt as the Shankill's identity is deeply intertwined with its past. When looking at the *"fair return"* (Spradley, 1979, p. 38) for the informants it was evident throughout the fieldwork period that many were glad that the much-forgotten Loyalist side was receiving attention. The majority of the interlocutors expressed that they felt the Republican side of the story had been told and researched a thousand times over and they felt their community did not get the platform to do so. As Espinoza stated in her article, she encountered research fatigue with the Palestinian refugees that had been asked for many interviews before (Espinoza, 2020, p. 251). However the *"[c]Colombian refugees were eager to talk about their experiences, as they believed there was little attention given to their resettlement"* (Espinoza, 2020, p. 251). Espinoza's experience is somewhat akin to ours, as the Loyalist community of the Shankill had not experienced 'research fatigue' in that sense and wanted their voices and stories to be heard.

Spradley also suggests that making reports available to informants is a necessity in conducting ethical ethnographic work (Spradley, 1979, p. 38). We ensured all of our informants would be

able to access our final research report. However, only ACT and the ACT Women's' Group were interested in this.

4.3.5 From Writing Down to Writing Up

During fieldwork you collect different types of material. This can be notes, photographs, interview transcription or conversations. This is called the data collection phase of fieldwork. But how do you move from collection to the analysis to the 'writing up' phase? In ethnography, it can be difficult to follow a linear model for research, because of the nature of ethnography. Analysis is entangled in the early phase of research, and the nature of ethnography is flexible. During fieldwork, or even during a single interview, attention can shift to aspects that you did not consider investigating beforehand. The phases of fieldwork, analysis and writing up are inextricably linked. When the researcher starts their analysis and thinks about how to write it up during their fieldwork, for example, when asking follow-up questions (O'Reilly, 2005). The goal is to use the material gathered under fieldwork, which often consists of many contradictory and loosely related interviews and produce a coherent and focused analysis of some more specific aspects of social life. A common method for organising and finding analytical themes in your data is through coding. After transcribing the interviews, you move to the coding phase. In the coding phase you read your transcription again and note down themes, ideas and issues that parts of the transcription suggest. Often the first coding phase consists of open coding, where you note down all themes and ideas, before moving to focused coding, where specific themes have been chosen and are delved deeper into (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 143). During fieldwork a lot of themes and issues might have presented themselves already as the ethnographer has spent a prolonged period of time with the interlocutors. These themes might have come through informal conversation, during interviews, when writing fieldnotes or when discussing with research partners. The themes that the researcher wants to pursue further are

not simply 'out there' to discover. They are themes amongst many and chosen by the researcher based on initial focus, academic background and more. The goal is to take these themes and observations and make general analytical categories to investigate further. One way of selecting themes is by giving priority to themes with a substantial amount of data. Another way is to give priority to themes that are important to the members of the studied group (Emerson et al., 1995, pp. 152-159).

4.4 Considerations on Studying Still Functioning Defensive Architecture

When researching the community of the Shankill and the impact of the Peace Walls, it is of great importance to remember that we are carrying out research on objects, such as the walls, that are contested because they are still serving a purpose of defence and separation. In a very simplified way, teleological analysis of a given object dives into a categorisation based on temporal division, where the object is understood through the notion of purpose and served purpose. The perceived impression and expression of the object is altered through how we see the purpose of the object.

In his book on how architectural leftovers can be understood both as a site of historical heritage, but also as a pile of mere rubble, Gáston Gordillo implements the power of teleology in research: Studying Mayan and colonial Spanish ruins in Northern Argentina, Gordillo concludes that the teleological notion of purpose defines whether the ruins are historically sanctified or just understood as an unimportant leftover from a distant time (Gordillo, 2014, pp. 254-255). Though these ancient ruins are not serving their original purpose of defence and fortification, they are loaded with historical importance, producing historical narratives about heritage, suppression, and colonialism. A purpose of an object can thereby change over time when the purpose shifts from being pragmatic to identifying. A good example of this is the old

Berlin Wall. Once serving a purpose of dividing and drawing the line between the bloc politics of the Cold War, the walls of Berlin now serve as an historical narrative on war, but also on reunification and civil activism.

As stated above, the purpose and acceptance of the Peace Walls in Northern Ireland are still very much contested. When looking at the statistics made from data on people living in close proximity to a Peace Wall, a big majority are in favour of preserving the Peace Walls (ACT, Survey, 2022). This postulation is further backed by our own data (Abe, 2022, [00:13:04]). This opinion often comes from the recognition that the walls are still serving its original purpose of separating and protecting the communities from rioting and violence. In other words, the Peace Walls of Northern Ireland are to this day still functioning as defensive architecture, thereby differentiating themselves to other examples of former historical fortifications stranded in the present.

4.5 Analysis Strategy

Our analysis strategy consisted of several phases. Already when doing fieldwork, several themes stand out. These were arguments and stories that our interlocutors would often end up mentioning without us asking. An example of this was The Troubles and the consequences of this civil conflict on the Shankill community. After we concluded our field trip, we transcribed all our interviews and focus groups interviews. During this time an intimacy with your material is developed, as you start to see patterns and thematics both interesting for the researcher and important to the interlocutors. Following this, we coded our material. We read through the interview material and thematically categorised the parts of the interviews in an open-ended way. After this, we picked several themes that we found both relevant and interesting in answering our problem statement. We also had to bear in mind to choose themes around which

our material proved to be of a satisfactory quantity. This led to the last preparatory phase of close-ended coding, where our themes were chosen, and we looked to see where the themes were mentioned more hidden or behind the lines. The themes that we chose to further analyse were selected regarding the material and spatial aspects of the Shankill, trauma, memory, and remembrance following The Troubles, and hope in the younger generation. These themes were then analysed in depth backed up by relevant theories from academics in the field to support our arguments.

5. Theory

This section will introduce the central theoretical framework applied in this project. This thesis uses a combination of different theories in order to examine more closely specific points of the Shankill community. Firstly, it will introduce our conceptualisation of communities as an analytical focus. This will be followed by the theoretical framework for the first chapter of the analysis, that focuses on the material and spatial aspects of the Shankill. A general introduction to the concepts of space and place will lead on to the core concept of 'place identity'. This is followed by our theoretical framework concerning time as an object of research. Lastly, the framework of hope will be introduced.

5.1 Imagined and Forced Communities

When researching a given community, the community as an object and concept can alter through how the researcher chooses to work with communities. Scholars have through time given various definitions and arguments on how to perceive communities from an analytical perspective. But a community, in the broadest understanding of the word, can be defined by more or less clear identities. A specific ethnic community, for example, can be signified by aspects of ethnicity or religion. These types of communities can be visually clear to spot and delineate, as both religion and ethnicity can manifest the identity around which a community forms. This can be said to be relevant in our case, as Protestantism in Northern Ireland is one of the major and most practised religions, but it also overlaps with the political signifier of the Protestant community of the Shankill, making religion, identity, and politics very intertwined in the community.

Many scholars, though, have also founded theories on communities as something that are created through a shared feeling of identity and belonging - so-called *imagined communities*

(Anderson, 2016, pp. 7-8). In Benedict Anderson's perception of these imagined communities, a group of individuals who share a mutual feeling of being connected through signifiers of identity, whether religious, political, or ethnic, manifests a community around the shared elements. Put in other words, in Anderson's understanding of communities, the shared identity is the founding stone of the imagined community (Axel, 2008, p. 1147). This differs from the more traditional understanding, in which communities are understood as the foundation for the emerging identity. Community and community identity play a large role in this thesis. We therefore find it important to clarify that we work with a combination of definitions of community. The Protestant Shankill are using visual signifiers of identity (murals, memorial sites, cemeteries, flags) to produce and maintain a clearly defined identity. But we must not neglect the importance of the imagined: the Shankill community is also formed around a strong feeling of Shankill origin (Abe, 2022, [00:03:38]), making Anderson's theory of imagined communities critical to our research.

In conjunction with considering communities as imagined, it is important to also think of the Shankill community as a forced community created through past social engineering. As mentioned in the context section, the Shankill is also a result of forced resettlement, carried out by the British forces, and as a result of sectarian violence. It is true that within the Shankill, residents share a communal sense of identity (politics, religion, class) and this forms the community identity which was felt so strongly by many of our interlocutors and something they put great importance on. However, the Shankill community, although in existence before the building of Peace Walls, is segregated from the rest of Belfast and its communities physically (Belfast Interface Project, 2017). The community then is protected by a material boundary from outsiders that do not share the same identity, which in turn allows it to continue

and deepen its homogeneity over generations. Seeing the Shankill community as both imagined and forced defines our definition of community in this project.

5.2 Space and Place

How can place be defined? How does it feel to be on the Shankill Road, adorned with murals and British flags in comparison to Belfast City Centre, with its generic facades of office buildings and commercial premises? One way to understand it is through the distinction between space and place. In urban theory, space is abstract and has a large volume. Space is a realm without meaning, a mere fact of life, and provides the room and coordinates for human existence. A place is a space that people are attached to in some way and that people ascribe meaning to. This means that the distinction between space and place is highly individualised (Cresswell, 2004). Anonymous commercial areas might seem devoid of meaning and attachment to some but might represent a safe income and fun collegial relationships for a businessman. John Agnew (1987) outlines three aspects of place as a meaningful location: location, locale and sense of place. Location refers to the fact that a place needs to exist in space and have a location in time. Locale is the material setting for social relations happening in a place: the shape and materiality of the space where people live their life, work, and relax. Sense of space is the relationship between places and people; the way in which people ascribe meanings and emotions to a specific place, and the way in which a specific place gives emotions and meaning to those who use it (Agnew, 1987). A person's favourite tree for climbing can have these three qualities, while for a lot of other people, it is simply a tree, devoid of meaning and similar to all other trees in the area. Agnew's three aspects of a place gives a good starting point for analysing the meaning of a place by looking at the physical aspects, the surrounding location, and the meaning ascribed to it by those who move within it.

Yi-Fu Tuan describes space as movement and place as a pause, a stop along the way. What starts as an undifferentiated space as you move through it, can become a place when you stop and interact with it and endow it with value (Tuan, 1977, p. 6). One moves through space in a train, but when it stops and one investigates the small village and grabs a coffee, the village begins to be ascribed a meaning: a small, cosy and sleepy town or an eerie and unwelcoming village.

5.3 Place Identity

Place identity is a theoretical framework concerned with how the environment surrounding an individual or group is part of their self- and group identity. Proshansky and Fabian introduce and define place identity as: *"a substructure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognition about the physical world in which the individual lives''* (Proshansky & Fabian, 1983, p. 59). In short, the focus is on how self-identity is not only based on individual, interpersonal, and social processes, but also the physical and spatial environment surrounding the individual. In this view, the place is an important aspect of a person's identity (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 36). Place identity is a contested concept, and Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira identify three different perspectives and utilisations of the concept. The first is the conceptualisation that a place can be experienced as part of oneself; research in this perspective can show that home burglary can be experienced as violence to the dweller's body. The second approach is the theory that place can be congruent with the individual's values, attitudes, and behaviours. In this approach, a redefinition of self-identity is not necessary if someone is moving, if the idea of place identity of the new area of residence is consistent with the place identity of the subject. The third and most used perspective is place identity as the emotional connection to a place. Here, place identity is seen as a part of self-identity and how

people describe themselves as belonging to a place (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, pp. 36-37).

In this thesis, we are following Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira's work on place identity in an intergroup context, which is the relationship between different groups. In this context, the environment is seen as a stage for intergroup relations based on the individual's idea of belonging. They base this conceptualisation on *Social Identity Theory* and *Social Categorisation Theory*. Place identity is understood as a subcategory of social identity of the self with aspects of self-concepts that are based on the idea of belonging to a place. Places are social categories with a shared social meaning based on the interactions between subjects. According to Social Identity Theory, a group exists only on the background of a shared feeling of belonging in individuals. Following this, a place exists only when a person makes a mental delimitation of it, a place different from other places (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 37).

Following Social Identity Theory four principles are expected: Firstly, place identity leads to a positive view of place that the individual identifies with through an overestimation of positive aspects and underestimation of the negative aspects. Secondly, place identity leads to an overestimation of the ingroup (the group an individual belongs to) homogeneity and intergroup (between groups) difference. Thirdly, an individual has different identities based on the membership of different places. These identities become prominent in different contexts based on the subconscious need for positive distinction. Finally, some spatial factors can act as a facilitator of the individual's identification with the place, and of the external perception of the space as having a strong identity (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 37).

5.3.1 Social Identity Theory and Self Categorisation Theory

Social Identity Theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and James Turner in the 1970s and 1980s. The theory seeks to understand group belonging and intergroup relationships from the concepts of self-categorisation, social comparison and the development of a common self-identification based on characteristics that define the group (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 38). Following this line of thinking, individuals seek to perceive and present the group they belong to as different from other groups, as a way of achieving a positive social identity, which is the part of the self-derived from group membership. This has consequences such as ethnocentrism, ingroup favouritism, intergroup differentiation, and perception of self and members of ingroups and outgroups in terms of relevant group stereotypes (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 38).

Social Categorisation Theory is an elaboration of Social Identity Theory and has a focus on the processes by which people categorise themselves in specific social categories. One of the main points is that people have multiple identities that they shift between depending on the context. Identities are, according to this theory, highly contextual. Different levels of identity exist ranging from more specific, place-bound (e.g. the place identity of Shankill resident) to a more abstract and inclusive (national identity of being a UK citizen) (Hoggs & Abrams, 1988, pp. 89-90).

5.3.1 Conceptualisation and Utilisation

In this section the concepts of Social Identity Theory and Social Categorisation Theory will be transposed to be about places and not groups. It is expected, based on these theories, that individuals who identify strongly with a specific place will perceive the place more positively than non-residents, or people who identify less with that specific place. Social comparison is a

central process to social identity. Two modes of comparison are relevant here: the first is social comparison in evaluating people of the same group (the ingroup), and the second concerns choice of outgroup (other groups) for social comparison. In the ingroup, this leads to highlighting similarities and minimising differences between group members and furthering an idea of homogeneity and social cohesion in the group. For the outgroup, an increase in differentiation takes place (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 40).

Another aspect to Social Categorisation Theory is the idea that we have several identities that are brought forward at different times. These identities have different levels of inclusiveness, and are dependent on different contexts, that makes one identity more salient in a specific setting. Place identity is expected to be expressed in a hierarchical manner with different levels of inclusion (one's room, house, neighbourhood, country) (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 42).

The theory of place identity will be applied to argue how the interlocutors experience the place of Shankill. The level of identification will be analysed and how that affects the perception of the area, the ingroup homogeneity and outgroup difference. Furthermore, the findings from the basis of an analysis of place identity will be used to view the meaning and impacts that a specific place can have on a group in a post-conflict society.

5.4 Time as an Object of Research

In researching post-conflict societies, the concept of time proves a valuable catalyst in understanding the precursors to a given armed conflict, the period of the conflict itself, and the post-conflict period of reconciliation, justice, and moving on (Scott, 2014, p. 2). Research based on historical analysis must have a constant consideration of time's importance as,

quoting philosopher Agamben: "*Every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated.*" (Scott, 2014, p. 7). According to Agamben, time in historical analysis is not only a useful tool, but it is vital to the understanding of historical events because time and historical narratives are intertwined and inseparable. Historical narratives are therefore constantly influenced by time, as new perceptions and perspectives arise, impacting the narratives and altering into new understandings and outcomes: narratives alter through time. These theories in application set out to show how historical narratives frame individual and collective perceptions of realities, and how perceived realities are dynamic due to its relation to the temporal past, present, and future.

In his theory on the temporality of the aftermaths of political catastrophe (Scott, 2014, p. 2), David Scott bases many of his arguments on sociologist Karl Mannheim's generation theory. Generational theory supplements Scott's findings, as this helps the reader understand how a given historical event, for example an armed conflict, can be defining for the collective expression and identity of a generation (Scott, 2014, p. 71-72). In our study of post-conflict Shankill, The Troubles as an historical event has very much been categorising for the community. Collective memories of violence and suffering during the conflict have manifested the base, from where the Shankill community creates its identity as a Protestant neighbourhood in the Northern Irish capital. But Mannheim's theory has also proved vital to understanding how generations born after the end of The Troubles, thereby having no direct memories of the conflict, can form around the political and social remnants left in the country. Analysing the intergenerational interaction between the Shankill's various generations helps us understand how time affects the transformation of a conflict-torn urban area to a more functioning and sustainable society. Following Mannheim's theory we must seek to understand generations as

not categorised by the members' age, but: *"as social institutions of temporal experience, [that] embody successive and overlapping frameworks of remembering, successive intellectual and affective ways to assimilate or incorporate, the past in the present"* (Scott, 2014, p. 102).

5.4 Hope

The theoretical framework in the third chapter of the analysis is based on a combination of Ghassan Hage's conceptualisation of hope (Hage, 2003) and Simon Turner's interpretation of hope (Turner, 2015). These definitions in tandem will categorise hope in the context of the Shankill. Hage's thesis on hope is as follows: *"[S]ocieties are mechanisms for the distribution of hope, and that the kind of affective attachment (worrying or caring) that a society creates among its citizens is intimately connected to its capacity to distribute hope."* (Hage, 2003, p. 3). The Shankill can thus be understood as a *"caring society"* which *"is essentially an embracing society that generates hope among its citizens and induces them to care for it"* (Hage, 2003, p. 3). The Shankill motivates its members to care for it and hope for its future. The actions that these hopes motivate will be investigated in the third section of the analysis.

The third chapter of the analysis will thus present and analyse the inhibitions to, and the expressions of hope that the younger generations of the Shankill have both for themselves as individuals, and the Shankill as a society. Turner uses Darren Webb's definition of hope:

> *"To hope is thus to ascribe intrinsic value to one's enroutedness, to place one's trust in the efficacy of human agents while accepting its contingent indeterminacy, and to possess the conviction that whatever journey we are taken on by ourselves, via others, will be of positive worth."* (Webb, 2007, as cited in Turner, 2015, p. 176).

In basic terms, Turner's interpretation of hope is contingent upon uncertainty and open-endedness, liminality of situation or circumstance, and being understood as being beyond the individual (Turner, 2015). This will be instrumental in understanding how hope thrives in the adverse circumstances of the Shankill society. The Shankill will be analysed as both a society which creates hope for itself through its members and distributes hope within it.

Turner presents the case of Burundian refugees in Nairobi and how the precariousness of their situation in the city, in contrast to the relative security of the refugee camp, creates hope for the future. He argues that they are between a past in Burundi and a brighter and unknown future and in this precarious limbo of time and situation they are able to feel hope (Turner, 2015, p. 173). In the context of the Shankill, the younger generation is also in a limbo of time, as they live in an area in which the community is formed with deep rooted connection to its history, they are living in a space of memory, and themselves living in postmemory. This liminal time period and uncertainty is a space in which they can hope. 'Postmemory' (Scott, 2014, p. 126) is relevant when looking at the 'ceasefire babies' of the Shankill area which the third chapter will focus on. Scott takes his definition of postmemory from Marianne Hirsch:

> *"These are memories, she suggests, that successive generations "have" (in the sense that they are transmitted to them, often, though not only, through family lines) of traumatic events that preceded their births but that are nonetheless deeply formative for their own present experience [...] postmemories are not, obviously, literal memories inasmuch as they are the direct remembrances of a previous generation. They are therefore mediated less through recollection than through imagination."* (Scott, 2014, pp. 120-121)

The young people of the Shankill live in a space of postmemory as they are born after the Good Friday Agreement and the end of The Troubles. They live in a community largely formed by a past which they did not experience. They are influenced by the memories their parents have of The Troubles and not their own. Living in postmemory is formative to how young people hope and what they hope for. The actions that hope motivates will be discussed in the final chapter of the analysis.

Picture 2: ACT Women's Group preparing for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebration on Shankill Road.

Picture by authors

6. Analysis

Our analysis consists of three chapters: Chapter 1 delves into how the spatial and material aspects of the Shankill affect the community, including how murals, memorial sites, and segregation by the Peace Walls form and shape the Shankill community. Chapter 2 investigates how historical narratives frame individual and collective perceptions of realities, and how perceived realities are dynamic due to their relation to the temporal past, present, and future. Chapter 3 explores how hope thrives in adversity and is an ignition spark for action amongst the youth, motivating them to make communal change for the future.

6.1 Chapter 1: Segregation and the Spatial Environment of the Shankill

Walking from the centre of Belfast to the Lower Shankill, there is a drastic shift in the environment and atmosphere. Clean and well-maintained commercial buildings with small, neat strips of grass are replaced by smaller shopfronts, dilapidated housing, and derelict sites. Business people and students hurrying along on their way to school or the office give way to local people chatting on the street and looking at plastic merchandise in front of a shop. The decorations on the buildings change from more generic graffiti pieces and advertisements to political murals, Union Jacks, and large pictures of Queen Elizabeth II. 'Welcome to the Shankill' a sign greets us, giving room to the idea that you have entered an area different from the rest of Belfast. You have entered a community, where people know each other, different from the city centre full of commuters, tourists, and students. It feels like people grew up here and live here. The locals look at us when we walk past. We get a sense that they know that we are not from here. The further you walk up the Shankill Road, the more murals and memorial gardens you see. Huge murals of balaclava-clad men with machine guns alongside poppies, symbolic to military sacrifices in both World Wars, adorn the walls. 'Slaughter of the Innocents - IRA - Sinn Féin - ISIS - no difference' one of the signs read. Most of the murals commemorate

local men who were active in paramilitary groups during The Troubles, depicting as martyrs and immortalise attacks by the Republican side in the same period. Some mention the resilience and pride of the Loyalists in the Shankill. The past is actively present in the murals. There is a clear sense of pride and of expression of an identity different from the Catholic side, just adjacent to the Shankill Road. Coming from Copenhagen, these clear physical boundaries between two communities living so close together, along with the political murals are surprising. How do physical and spatial markers form and affect a community? How does physical segregation by towering interfaces affect an area? How do the murals honouring combatants during The Troubles form the present community? These are the questions investigated in this chapter.

Picture 3: A mural and a 'welcome' sign on the Shankill Road. Picture by authors

6.1.1 Identification with the Shankill

All but one of the interlocutors live in the Shankill, and most grew up in the area. Bart grew up in Ardoyne, a Catholic area close to the Shankill, but works in a youth group in the Upper Shankill.

The Shankill is important to all our interlocutors. They grew up there, went to school there, and have family and friends in the area. Several interlocutors had lived there for their entire lives. To our interlocutors, the Shankill represents their home and identity, a place they know and feel accepted in. The Shankill community is expressed as diverse, friendly, and community-centred, in which help is never far away. As Abe expressed it: "*The Shankill looks after themselves, the people look after each other.*" (Abe, 2022, [00:08:37]). Identity markers are visible in large parts of the Shankill: Union Jacks flying from buildings, UVF, UDA, and UDR murals, pictures of the Queen, and paintings of poppies.

> "*I've lived here for about 30 years. I'm… I'm retired, my life is beautiful. I have two small gardens by the house, and I come out to the pub two or three maybe more times a week. I really enjoy living here and there is a sense of community and I think the identity of the Shankill is very mixed.*" (Homer, 2022 [00:01:34]).

For several interlocutors it was important to them to be able to show identifying symbols. Carrying a Union Jack or another symbol is seen as an important part of their culture. Some of these identifying symbols are performed, for example, parades and bonfires. However, in most parts of Northern Ireland, it can be looked down upon if not dangerous at times to display so visually which community you belong to, as symbols such as flags or even certain colours can be perceived to be Loyalist or Republican, Protestant or Catholic. The Shankill offers a space where it is accepted to express Loyalist traditions and heritage. This is important to the residents of the Shankill, who feel they can be visually proud of their heritage, traditions, and Loyalist identity.

"And for us, it's just been stripped away, taken away. I mean, you can't... you couldn't carry a Union flag at the time, Jesus Christ, you'd be bate [beat-up]*, you know, and we live in a British country. [...] Regardless of the two communities here... this is still a British country and we still are in Northern Ireland. We should be able to display [that] and without offending anybody and be proud of who we are"* (Marge, ACT Women, 2022, [00:24:12]).

Several of our interlocutors are part of community groups, working to improve the community by different means. Cleaning up the area, repainting the Peace Walls, planning communal celebrations, or working with restorative justice are just some of the ways they are working to improve the area. They expressed a desire to make the Shankill appear more appealing to make the community thrive. They want to do volunteer and communal work for an area which is a clear indication that the people care about the surrounding environment and self-categorise as Shankill residents. Being a Shankill resident is not a neutral self-categorisation as the Shankill (as described in the context chapter) has a long history of Loyalist support. It becomes an identity in which religion and politics overlap and intertwine. It is a neighbourhood inhabited by people self-categorising as Loyalists. This history, together with the area being a working-class area with higher unemployment rates, lower education levels, and a higher level of violence (NISRA, 2017), incites stigma from outgroups. The stigma from outgroups makes the Shankill identity less salient in some cases, as it does not make a positive distinction but carries a negative stigma which can make the residents hide their Shankill identity.

"For me, when I think of the Shankill, I think of where I live like, you know, when I think of like, that's where my house is, like my granny lives around the corner. All the

things that are close and local to me whereas some other people, they say, Shankill is

like a shithole.” (Maggie, NBAP, 2022, [00:04:16]).

Despite some cases with outgroup confrontation and stigmatisation, our interlocutors did strongly identify with the Shankill and did self-categorise as Shankill residents. Being a Shankill resident, in their view, also meant being a Loyalist and a Protestant. The three identities were almost inseparable in most cases but referred to different levels of inclusiveness. Shankill resident is referring to the neighbourhood, while Loyalist refers to other politically like-minded people in Northern Ireland. Protestant is the most inclusive, and while we did not question that further, the self-categorisation as a Protestant bases you in a global Protestant community spanning the whole world. The more inclusive the categories are, the more abstract they become. Being a Shankill resident was a visible and important part of our interlocutors' self-identity.

Picture 4: Shopping window in a homeware shop on Lower Shankill Road. Picture by authors.

6.1.2 Prestige and Quality of Life in the Shankill

High identification levels often lead to a more positive evaluation of a place. An example of this is a study by Bonaiuto, Breakwell, and Cano (1996) which found that the higher the identification levels local residents had to their area, the lower they perceived the pollution levels of the local beaches to be.

As argued in the previous section, being from the Shankill was a vital part of our interlocutors' identity, which would thus lead to a positive evaluation of the Shankill environment. Most of our interlocutors found that the Shankill was dirty, 'left to rot' and deteriorating (Maggie, NBAP, 2022, [00:04:16]), especially around the derelict sites, which take up a lot of space in the Shankill. Several people mentioned a study which found that the derelict sites had room for around 3,000 homes (Lisa, 2022, [00:07:54]). The area around the Peace Walls was also described as an 'eyesore', especially for non-residents that did not grow up in the Shankill. During an informal conversation with Moe, and also concretised in the ACT survey he carried out, throwing litter and leaving dog shit on the streets has negative consequences for the area and community, as it would normalise littering, and lower the perception of prestige and quality of life in the Shankill (ACT, Survey, 2022). This would make it harder to attract new residents and investors, a problem which the community is suffering from, as the stereotype ascribed to the Shankill Road would be confirmed in a visual sense.

Picture 5: "Did you know? The Shankill has over 80 waste sites the size of 62 football pitches with the space to build 3300 homes." The sign is right next to a waste site on the Shankill Road. Picture by authors.

"I mean, you've been on the Shankill a few days yourself. You walk up our Shankill Road and it's deteriorating. It's deprived. There's no jobs. I mean [nothing to raise grants] and the overgrown weeds. And that's not there. It just seems to be going downhill" (Selma, ACT Women, 2022 [01:13:28]).

"Because we are unique in that regard that there's no other area in Northern Ireland that has been blighted by dereliction [more] than the Shankill, [it] is something that we're really, really trying to push for" (Maggie, NBAP, 2022, [00:16:56]).

"The politicians don't live in this area, so they don't care. They pack up at night, go home to the leafy suburbs. We can't because we live here. Yeah. Um, for instance, um, I'm sure if you've been along the length of the Peace Walls, but I look out of my door

every day and see that… you know. It's an eyesore, it's terrible… So we're getting

ourselves involved, the whole community, cleaning up" (Carl, ACT, 2022, [00:28:15]).

We did not find a positive distinction of the Shankill regarding the surrounding environment. The general discourse was that it was dirty, not very respectable, and the whole area needed regeneration. Several people mentioned that they were involved in projects working with cleaning the area and painting the Peace Walls. This shows that despite the negative perception of the cleanliness and quality of the area, a will to work, even volunteer, for the area exists. This can be connected to the importance of the place identity for the residents. Their Shankill identity was salient in this regard, and they wanted to improve the area to show that Shankill is a good neighbourhood to non-residents from an outgroup, which would give their Shankill identity a greater positive distinction. This motivation did offer a positive distinction as residents expressed and perceived ingroup members as hard-working and caring. The scapegoat was often expressed to be politicians and the state that did not show interest in the area, and left Shankill 'to rot' because they did not care about it. In that way, responsibility for the environment of the Shankill was left to the outgroup. The state is argued to not care about the Loyalists and left the areas to deteriorate.

"If you live in an area that's left to rot [...] If you are told constantly that you are shit

you are gonna believe that you are shit, and if you live in surroundings that are shit it's

just going to manifest itself in that way… and I think it's just the legacy of The Troubles

and again a lack of investment and a lack of no real input into these communities is

what makes it happen, it really is" (Maggie, NBAP, 2022, [00:38:24]).

The survey made by ACT (ACT, Survey, 2022) in collaboration with the Mid Shankill Residents' Group supports these arguments. 284 surveys were answered by Shankill residents. 98,2% answer that the Shankill is in need of improvement, 92% think that it needs a clean up and 93% think it needs more housing (ACT, Survey, 2022). The general attitude is that the Shankill does not appear like a nice neighbourhood and looks 'like shit' which does not correspond to the values of the residents, and makes the outgroup devalue the Shankill residents' identity, lifestyle, and values. Furthermore, the depressing and decaying condition can undermine the quality of life for residents (Coyles et al., 2021, p. 4). According to Maggie, the decaying environment of the Shankill manifests itself in the residents and lowers the prestige and quality of life. This is also happening with the residents' view of the outgroup, where 85% answered that the community is viewed 'negatively' by others (ACT Survey, 2022). The perceived condition of the Shankill environment is closely related to the residents' place identity, and they are not satisfied with the current condition, which lowers the positive distinction of the internal group identity and makes negative connotations manifest internally. It lowers the prestige, quality of life, and the positive distinction of being a Shankill resident which in turn is an important motivation for the residents to improve the conditions of the area in which they live.

6.1.3 Safety in the Shankill

While the material environment of the Shankill did not receive any positive distinction, the community-spirit did. The community of the Shankill was perceived as being close-knitted, where everyone knew each other and would go out of their way to help a co-resident.

> *"I love it. But they* [the Shankill community] *are the loveliest people you'll ever, ever meet. And I really, really... Like we are the most deprived area probably in Northern*

Ireland, but we are proud people, we really, really are. And we are so friendly. And so, so lovely and so nice. I'd never leave it. I'll be here till I die. I really will" (Lisa, 2022 [00:14:58]).

"I have been on the Shankill [for] twenty years. Yeah. And the community is amazing. The work that they do for the community and together… is absolutely amazing. And I'm just sorry, I never grew up on it." (Selma, ACT, 2022, [00:04:02]).

Lisa also described how derelict sites breed crime (Lisa, 2022, [00:07:54]). But despite the idea of Shankill being grounds for crime and paramilitary activity, all our interlocutors felt safe in this community. They described how they knew most people and families. When asked about their feeling of personal safety in the Shankill, all interlocutors answered that they did feel safe. A strong identification with an area suggests, according to place identity theory (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 37), that residents downplay the negative aspects of an area as people strive towards positive distinctions of their identity. The interlocutors expressed that they felt safe and would not hesitate walking home from a pub at night. Some mentioned that they were old which made them not appear dangerous or hostile (Homer, 2022, [00:47:19]), while others mentioned that everyone knew them, and the community was safe in general. Several of the older interlocutors expressed that they felt safer during the 1970s and 1980s because of the paramilitary groups that operated in the area and stamped out anti-social behaviour and petty crime (elaborated on in Chapter 2). They expressed that people respected and feared the paramilitary groups which were perceived to eradicate crime and anti-social behaviour, and uphold order in the community (Marge, 2022, [00:11:10]).

When asked the same question about safety of their children, grandchildren, elderly relatives, or spouses, they felt more reluctant expressing safety on their behalf (Maggie, 2022, [00:44:01]). The more they revealed about the feeling of safety for their loved ones in the area, the less safe it appeared. This can be understood as a generational 'othering', which is also elaborated on in Chapter 2 in this thesis. Lisa expresses that the area itself felt safe, but she was concerned at times because of the potential of outbursts of violence from young people rioting or the potential of sectarian violence, that is not directed at her son but that she could be caught up in. Wanting to make a positive distinction of their place identity is less of a priority when it comes to the safety of their loved ones.

Picture 6: Peace Line running along the Cupar Way. Just a few metres beyond the wall lies Bombay Street, in the Catholic Falls Road area. Picture by authors.

6.1.4 The Peace Walls: Segregation and Outgroup Differentiation

This section will investigate how segregation of the inner-city neighbourhoods affects the Shankill residents and community, and what outgroup differentiation takes place, especially in contrast with the Catholic neighbourhood of the Falls Road.

How does growing up in a neighbourhood bordered by Peace Lines affect the group identity? How does it impact the communities separated by walls? Björkdahl argues that to build peace in a divided city several different actors, institutions, and initiatives are needed, including *"constructing safe shared public spaces, limiting the spatial expression of national discourses, opening up the city and dismantling material barriers…"* (2013, p. 211). In the Shankill, expressions of a national discourse and material barriers are an ingrained part of the urban landscape, mostly visible along the Peace Walls and by murals.

Do walls *actually* minimise violence? 24 years after the end of the conflict, is their removal not overdue? Most of the interlocutors have an ambiguous view of the Peace Walls. On one hand, they are 'an eyesore' (Carl, ACT, 2022, [00:28:15]). Areas surrounding the walls are often seen as being less nice with more empty spaces and more derelict lots which decrease the prestige and quality of life around the walls. On the other hand, they are seen as an important part of the area. They have been a part of the urban environment for decades. They are understood to provide protection and minimise the violence between Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods.

> *"I'm… my identity is very important to me. I'm comfortable with the Peace Walls are here and I would not like to see them come down any time soon. And what would maybe seem abnormal to you is normal to me, and the community that I grew up in was with… paramilitarism and Britishness"* **(**Marge, ACT, 2022, [00:01:53]).

"...but it's awful… nobody wants to live in an interface, in an ideal world all the walls would be taken down, but it does make me feel a bit safer." (Lisa, 2022, [00:19:12]).

The interlocutors argued that the walls still serve a purpose. It provides security locally in the Shankill area by being a physical obstruction to violence in the areas that Catholic and Protestant neighbours meet, thus making sectarian violence less likely to occur. Around 95% answered that the Peace Walls provides security in the 2022 ACT Survey (ACT, Survey, 2022). It is evident that the interfaces separate people, which leads to a stronger us/them dichotomy and thereby increase violence and minimise social interaction with the nearby Falls Road community (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 25).

The interfaces are the boundary areas that physically and symbolically separate Protestant and Catholic communities from each other in Belfast, Derry~Londonderry, and Portadown. Because they are physically separated, most of today's clashes and intergroup violence between the groups happen along the walls and boundaries. Less violence is experienced in the inner parts of the neighbourhood (Boal & Murray, 1977, pp. 364-371). The walls are thereby a contested area, the space for political violence where the opposing groups are more likely to meet. This makes the Peace Walls a place to defend and a necessary condition for living in relative peace in the Shankill. Segregation provides the base and rationale for vigilante groups and paramilitarism, as they act as community defence (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 21).

"The Union is everything I stand for. Everything. I'm a Protestant, and I'm British. Ehm… Loyalism for me is, I'm loyal to my community, I'm loyal to what paramilitarism is here. Because I grew up with them protecting me. I'm loyal to me being an Orange

Protestant, and to the Crown, to Britishness. I'm loyal to that" (Marge, ACT, 2022, [00:03:24]).

The segregation by the walls is a consequence of The Troubles. It was necessary at the time to build walls to minimise violence. The Department of Justice developed a plan to take down the walls by 2023 (Department of Justice Interface Programme, n.d.), but there was no community consultation about this issue and the communities again felt politically neglected and viewed the plan with distrust. As Homer expressed it: "*[...] it's easy to build a wall. It's hard to bring it down*" (Homer, 2022, [00:56:04]). Several interlocutors expressed that politicians do not care and listen to the Shankill community. They do not understand how it is to live in the community and along the interfaces. Political action is necessary to take down the walls, and as that is seen as impossible, the community uses other means to 'take back the wall' and show their grievances, hopes and identity and inscribe the walls with a specific meaning. As Marge expresses it: *"We're taking ownership of that wall again"* (Marge, 2022, [00:28:15]). David Harvey argues that places do not come with an inscribed meaning and memory attached to it, but are contested terrains of competing definitions (1996, p. 309). In this sense, the Shankill residents want to take charge of the story and meaning of the Peace Walls. Instead of only being spatial reminders of inter-community violence and The Troubles, they want to tell the story of the Loyalist, Protestant, Shankill resident and their experience of the conflict. They argue that the Nationalists have rewritten history to their benefit, and the Loyalist side of history is lacking. The use of wall murals is a way of territorial marking and an illustration of territorial power. Specific events and stories are selected and painted on the walls to present territorial belonging and an active struggle and resistance. The murals remind those who see them of oppression and celebrate the 'necessary' armed resistance to keep control over the area. It

strongly demarcates the area as a Loyalist Protestant area, and reproduces the stories, traditions, and values that people inscribe this identity with (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 68).

> *"We don't wanna promote a Peace Wall. But it's there. Promote our story on that wall. People need to know that it wasn't just Nationalists that were doing… you know, they have their narrative, which is absolute nonsense… In this area… and we need to, as Marge says, to give our narrative, our story."* (Carl, ACT, 2022, [00:39:07]).

This is a mechanism of intergroup differentiation, in that Nationalists are accused of distorting history by giving a narrative which is 'absolute nonsense'. Distorting history is seen as a negative act, which is followed by the reactionary wish to give the side of the story from a Loyalist viewpoint. This differentiation means that the Loyalist side awards themselves positive distinction as from our interlocutors' viewpoint their narrative is not distorted or skewed: they see their story as the embodiment of the truth. The Peace Walls are seen as an important part of the Shankill. They are expressed to provide security and a medium to express group-identity to contest the meanings ascribed from outsiders. They provide both physical protection and a means to protect the narrative of the Loyalist side of the story by giving a physical canvas on which to present it to outsiders. It protects against both violence and assaults on the Shankill resident's identity.

6.1.5 Segregated Communities and Fear of Violence

Segregated communities produce alternative forms of social interaction and sustains politics of opposition. Segregation both engenders political separation and enhances societal distinction between segregated people. Furthermore it encourages enclosure of ideas, monitoring of the entry of strangers, and symbolic exclusion of the politically undesirable. Those who are

'outside' and oppositional (such as the Nationalists or even politicians) become external, distant and remote from the area (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 18-19). Despite the defensive walls, segregation leaves the practice of violence active, as it creates deep forms of spatial isolation and mistrust. The walls are not only defensive 'peace' walls, but a visible representation of the extreme and divergent political codes inscribed upon them. Residents in segregated communities can seek to alleviate their fears and prejudices and in doing so mitigate the incidences of harm by defining a sense of security from the walls and defining segregated living as protective because of the defensive and physical reality of the wall between them and the 'other' side of the wall (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, pp. 20-21). The feeling of security that the walls produce is evident in the interviews:

> *"Nobody, nobody wants the walls come down. I'm absolutely sure it's the same on the other side of the wall. Yeah, it's not for fear of The Troubles starting again, and both communities are going to attack each other and all the rest. It's just… it's always been there. It's a comfort blanket, it's a safety net."* (Carl, ACT, 2022, [00:39:36]).

The walls are described as a safety net or a comfort blanket that gives peace and safety internally in the Shankill. Their imposing forms, with barbed wire and large fences, do lend itself to the idea that they are impenetrable and keep 'others' out. The form and materiality itself support the function of the walls.

Although the interlocutors expressed they had a feeling of personal safety within the Shankill, they did not feel this way when it came to interface areas, where attacks are viewed as more likely to happen because of the nearby 'other' neighbourhood, which is viewed with mistrust. Abe describes a facility in the Catholic Falls Road area, where there have been attacks, and he would not walk through that area at night (Abe, 2022, [00:48:39]). Lisa says that she does not

want her children to play around the interfaces (Lisa, 2022, [00:26:52]). These fears and prejudices exist despite the interlocutors describing that they do not experience the Catholic community as being violent or dangerous. The walls and segregation create mistrust and fear between the communities, and this fear is attempted to be alleviated by defining the Peace Walls as a 'comfort blanket' that makes it safe internally in the Shankill. This means our interlocutors attempt to avoid the interfaces and 'other' community as much as possible to minimise potential incidents of harm: *"Just think five years ago, there was a glass bomb on the other side of my wall with dissident Republicans who tried to attack the police. So it does definitely make me feel that bit safer."* (Lisa, 2022, [00:19:12]). Lisa argues here that the violence that happens, and is part of daily life, is along the walls and on the other side. For Lisa, this legitimises the existence of the walls and of segregated living by defining them as providing safety. No one wants to live in fear of violence, but it is part of daily life in the Shankill. By defining the walls as comfort blankets, their existence helps to alleviate the risk of being targeted in these patterns of violence. The fear and prejudice that exists within communities works to reinforce segregated living and make our interlocutors less likely to visit areas that are deemed as 'dangerous', as per Lisa's example, the interfaces and the other side.

6.1.6 Interfaces and Sanctuaries

The more violent areas are expressed to be on the outskirts of the community and the interfaces, where the Republican and Loyalist residential areas meet. The inner parts of the neighbourhood are mentally depicted as a safe space, despite the inner areas also experiencing violence and presence of paramilitary groups (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 74). Violence at the interfaces could be perceived to be scarier than internal violence as it becomes the frontier between the two opposing groups. Paramilitary violence within the Shankill itself is performed by paramilitary groups which are acknowledged by the community. Allen Feldman describes that

residents in Belfast make mental maps of 'safe' and 'unsafe' spaces, where the internal parts of the community are viewed as safe sanctuaries where people can feel at ease. The interface areas are seen as unsafe areas where violence is more likely and a sense of defencelessness and hazard leads to mobilisation of resistance (1991, p. 35). *"[...] the wall itself becomes the malevolent face of the people who live on the other side"* (Feldman, 1991, p. 37). The interfaces are described as areas more likely for violent attacks, rioting, and unrest, while the internal 'sanctuary' was expressed as safe areas:

"So my son, he's 12. So he's now out with his friends playing a lot. As I said, I live on an interface. Yes, I don't allow him to go to the Crumlin Road, because of the interface violence, I would just be absolutely horrified if he got caught up in that or got hurt or injured. So I think that those community safety issues would concern me more probably than anything, just being at an interface or getting caught up in something that he shouldn't really have been caught up in." (Lisa, 2022, [00:26:52]).

Lisa describes that the interface on Crumlin Road is a dangerous area and forbids her son going there, while at the same time describing the internal Shankill as a good community of *"lovely, proud, and nice people"* (Lisa, 2022, [00:14:58]). The interface/sanctuary construct is a way of organising the patterns of violence into specific channels and areas (Feldman, 1991, p. 36). This makes contact between the Shankill community and the neighbouring Falls Road community less likely, as the interfaces is a hazardous no-man's land. The walls and interfaces are thereby not only defensive barriers between the community, but also structures that makes contact and cross-community work more difficult and creates polarisation between the communities. Our interlocutors have a strong place identity with the Shankill (as argued in the first section of this chapter), which leads to perceiving the ingroup as more homogeneous and

the outgroup as different (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 37). Homogeneity supports the idea of the Shankill sanctuary as 'safe' in the residents' mental maps of the area, as like-minded people are seen as more dependable and trustworthy. In the Shankill, the interface/sanctuary construct along with a stronger ingroup homogeneity and outgroup differentiation leads to further compartmentalising of the communities.

Several of our interlocutors rarely or never went to the other side of the wall. Marge, who lived all her life in Shankill, describes her first time going to the other side of the wall:

> *"[...] I'm 51 and I live five minutes from that wall, not even five minutes. And last year was the very first time I was at the other side of that Wall. Bombay Street* [in the Catholic Falls area]*, the first time in my life and I live not even five minutes away from that… literally the other side of that… I was taking part in a tour of the City Cemetery with a tour guide, and I lost him. I lost a tour guide. Yeah, and he said: 'I am going to go to Bombay street', so I went there. And he wasn't there and I felt… I did feel not very safe. Now, I have to be honest… just a bit outta my comfort zone."* (Marge, ACT, 2022, [00:41:07]).

The crossing of ethno-sectarian boundaries is affiliated with a notion of the 'other' community being menacing, dangerous and unwelcoming because of the mistrust and fear between the communities (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 83). Marge felt unsafe and unwelcome despite her being close to her home. Normally she would never go to the other side, but spent her leisure time, doing her shopping and socialising in the Shankill. In Marge's case, it led to a feeling of insecurity and being out of her comfort zone. This is connected to the history of the area, the armed conflict, traumas, and the symbols of difference such as the flag of the Republic of

Ireland and Republican murals. The other side of the walls is for Marge, understood to be a place different than her home in the Shankill because of the spatial isolation between the communities and the "*exaggerated notions of difference*" (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 21) that makes a Shankill resident on Bombay Street feel like an unwelcome alien.

> *"I mean, by no means were you brought up to dislike or hate Catholics and that, you know, that wasn't the case. But you seen for yourself, you know… your daily childhood was [around] the Shankill, you know, and that was your entertainment.* [rioting against the other side]. *Sad to say, but it was. Yeah, and it was normal."* (Marge, ACT, 2022, [00:42:49]).

The segregation by the Peace Walls leads to societal distinction, mistrust and fear between the communities (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 28). As Marge expressed it: *"It's hard to get out of that… that fear… when you've lived with that for so long."* (Marge, 2022, [00:42:47]). In this context, segregation motivates the Shankill to practise a politics of difference to the near Falls Road, where focus is on positively distinguishing the ingroup compared to the 'other' group. This is often fuelled by prejudices and stereotyping and can often lead to violence, especially in the interface area. This violence, motivated by segregation, can lead to justification of the segregation which thereby runs in a circle argument. The walls become a symbol of the 'unpredictable, dangerous other', which makes intergroup exchanges harder to achieve and reduces contact with people deemed culturally and politically at odds. Abe expressed this with a story about the positive open mindedness of the Shankill, while the Falls Road was not as open minded. This can be understood as an attempt to make a positive distinction of the Shankill as an open-minded community compared to the Falls Road community:

"Abe: *But there was a man coming in* [the pub] *last week, who I know well. He is a big Celtic supporter* [A Scottish Catholic football team]. *And he walks in with a Celtic shirt. Alright… there's not a problem… he was high up at one stage in a certain organisation* [referring to a Republican paramilitary group] *but if I was wearing a Rangers* [A Scottish Protestant football team] *shirt and trying to walk into a bar on the Falls Road…*

Interviewer: *And that would not be okay?*

Abe: *I would say not.*" (Abe, 2022, [00:42:07]).

The internal part of the community is viewed as a safe place, a sanctuary, which leads to the residents using their time internally in their communities despite internal violence and crime happening. This can be seen as a way to mitigate uncertainty and fear connected with living in a segregated community where patterns of violence are common. Segregation leads to a stronger group identity, which is seen in the Shankill, through the high identification levels associated with being from the Shankill and the feeling of safety internally and pride connected with being from the area. Segregation provides a possibility of investing faith in the community and to acquire cultural companionship which can motivate a feeling of safety and home, where residents feel close to their co-residents and neighbours. "*In crude terms segregation exists because it works*" (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 17). Segregation in Belfast is based upon heightened differentiation of the segregated communities, achieved through viewing and framing the communities as socially and culturally homogenous, and the outgroup as dangerous and different.

6.1.7 The Battle of the Narrative: Murals and Symbols in the Shankill

Walking through the Shankill, the senses are bombarded by huge murals depicting local 'heroes' from different events. The Battle of Somme in the First World War is a much-used reference along with paramilitary volunteers and leaders from the times of The Troubles. Pictures and murals of the Queen decorate the sides of worn-down houses flying numerous Union Jacks. "Belfast, Shankill Road The Heart of The Empire Salutes Her Majesty on 60 Glorious Years", a sign reads above seven pictures of the Queen. Many memorial gardens and memorial pictures are strewn all over the Shankill Road, remembering the fallen local heroes from The Troubles. These are often equipped with portraits of the dead, pictures of bombed pubs and short descriptions of the dates, the perpetrators and narratives of the injustices and assaults by Republicans. How does it shape a community to live in a politicised and militarised environment like this?


Picture 7: Memorial murals at the Bayardo Pub 1975 bombsite on Shankill Road. Picture by authors.

One of the signs reads 'Slaughter of the Innocents - IRA - Sinn Féin - ISIS - no difference', which puts the majority and leading Republican political party in the same group as the terrorist group, ISIS. By discursively framing Sinn Féin and the IRA as terrorist organisations that slaughter innocent people the Shankill residents legitimise the use of violence to defend the community from these organisations. Murals, flags, and political slogans are a form of territorial marking that illustrates the territorialised power (Goalwin, 2013, pp. 190-191). Certain events and situations are selected that remind the viewer of the struggle inflicted by opposing groups and celebrate the resistance of the Shankill. They range from mnemonic references to reinforcing cultural apartness of the Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods (Shirlow & Murtagh, 2006, p. 68).

The Battle of the Somme reference is a relatively new depiction of the Loyalist identity. According to Graham & Shirlow (2002), the Somme reference is a conscious effort by paramilitary groups to create a Protestant identity resource, that is not disfigured by internal fights between Unionist and Loyalists. The Battle of the Somme symbolises sacrifice as a significant number of Ulstermen lost their lives. The constant references to the Battle of the Somme can be seen as hailing the sacrifice of Ulster and their vital role in a military victory. The paramilitary UVF also makes this claim in their role of defending Ulster from external aggressors. This historical reference places the UVF in a larger narrative of resistance to forces encroaching on their territory and thereby justifies violence and resistance. Today's aggressors are seen by the Shankill to be the Catholic community which is increasing in population while the Protestant population is decreasing (Northern Ireland Assembly, 2011). Furthermore, the murals work to construct a narrative that legitimises ideological and political claims and attracts support from the local populations in an attempt to mobilise the community, especially Protestant communities which do not have as deep or lasting connection to The Troubles

(Goalwin, 2013, pp. 190-192). The murals promote 'Britishness' to show that the Shankill is part of the UK, contrasting the Republican narrative that places themselves more internationally with movements fighting for freedom all over the world (Goalwin, 2013, p. 208).
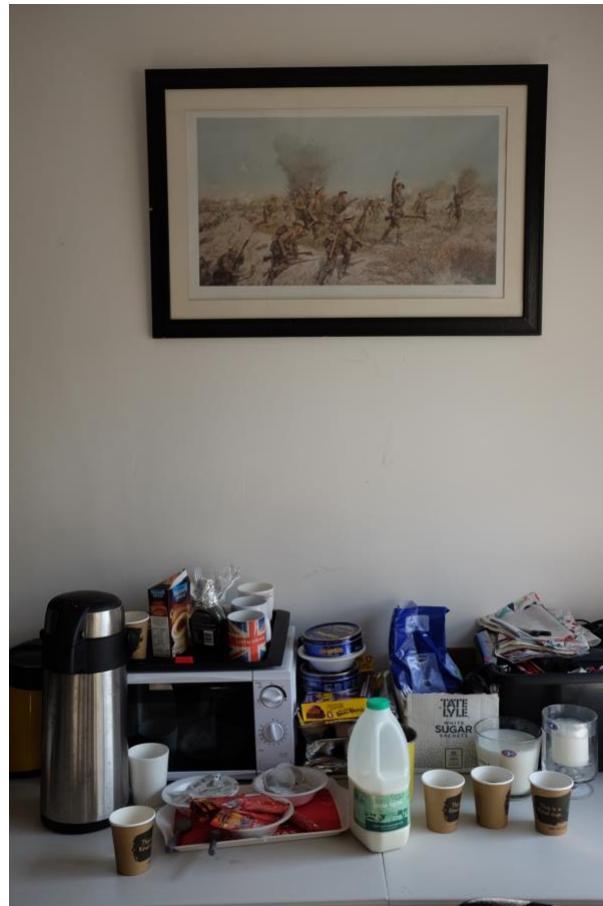
Picture 8: A framed painted picture from the Battle of the Somme

hanging in the coffee room in ACT. Pictures by authors.

The symbols and narratives displayed in the murals work to strengthen the division of the communities even more by using opposing narratives that support their own ideology: these contradictory narratives cannot coexist. This is evident in the afore-referenced quote by Carl (see full quotation on pp. 68-69) calling the Republican narrative on the walls for *"absolute nonsense"*, an untrue and faulty story, that the Republican community is expressing to gain

political leverage and support for their side. He is using this as an argument and motivation to put the Shankill side of the story on the walls for the world to see. The justification for making murals on the Loyalist side of the Peace Walls are a reaction to the narratives from the Republican community that are expressed to be revisionist. Efforts are made to construct a national 'myth', a true story, that imply continuity from the past and make their narrative true, pure, and innocent. This legitimises the paramilitary groups' and the communities' effort to maintain unity and social cohesion with or without violence (Goalwin, 2013, p. 193).

6.1.8 Sub-Conclusion

The spatial aspects of an area have an effect on group-identity and self-identity. It is argued that residents in the Shankill have a high level of identification with their neighbourhood and that their place identity is an important and often salient aspect of their identity. This did not lead to, as found in other studies (Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012, p. 37), a more positive evaluation of their surroundings. Our interlocutors found the Shankill dirty, deteriorating, and 'left to rot' which motivated action. It is argued that this motivation came from the Shankill being an important aspect of their identity, but it did not lead to a positive distinction in relation to the outgroups because of the current condition of the Shankill. In fact, it led to stigmatisation, as Maggie said when talking about how the outgroup viewed the locals from Shankill: "*Oh, you're from Shankill, you're not going to go anywhere*" (Maggie, NBAP, 2022, [00:04:16]). The overall prestige and quality of life in the Shankill was experienced to be low. This is connected to the environment, the 'dirty' conditions, and the large derelict sites that were seen to cause crime and anti-social behaviour that were argued to devalue the Shankill place identity. Our interlocutors expressed they feel safe internally in Shankill, because of the close-knitted community in which people know each other. When it came to the feeling of safety on behalf of family members the safety levels were lower

especially in the interface areas, that were seen as sites of violence and possible dangers. The interfaces are a contested area. This was investigated by Feldman's mental maps of the 'sanctuary'/'interface' construct, where the sanctuary is the internal areas of the neighbourhoods, where people could feel at ease despite the history of attacks in these areas too.

The segregation by the Peace Walls leads to mistrust and lower levels of contact between the segregated communities. Segregation fuels violence especially in the interface areas that people then tend to avoid. It also makes room for paramilitary groups as segregation heightens the sense that there is a reason to defend the area. Crossing boundaries between communities is expressed to be unpleasant or even dangerous, as the 'other' are seen to be unwelcoming which leads to less contact and intra-community relations. The neighbouring Falls Road area was described to be more dangerous and an area to avoid at night. The us/them dichotomy was strengthened even further by the murals and memorials sites that referred to selected past events and struggles. These references were argued to make the cultural and political claims and grievances legitimate in the face of a contrasting narrative by the Catholic community. Furthermore, the narratives worked to justify resistance and even violence in order to protect an area and maintain social cohesion and unity.

6.2 Chapter 2: The Zeitgeist of Shankill

The second chapter of this analysis sets out to show how time affects a post-conflict society. By going in-depth with intergenerational interaction based on collective post-conflict trauma in the Shankill, it will be illuminated how the community's memory and history of violence and suffering constitutes itself as an obstacle blocking the way towards peaceful

transformation, but how at the same historical circumstances also serves as the catalyst that binds the Shankill together in a strong sense of community spirit.

6.2.1 Ceasefire, Peace Time, and New Realities

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 marks the official ceasefire between the warring factions of The Troubles, establishing relative peace in Northern Ireland. At the time of writing, the official ceasefire has brought 24 years of peace, in the traditional liberal sense, to Northern Ireland, only disrupted now and then by dissident criminal groups on both sides, still swearing allegiance to the armed political factions of The Troubles (Trumbore, 2018, pp. 524-525). In understanding the period of armed conflict and the following period of transformation back into a functioning society of peace times, we must understand the new reality that followed the Good Friday Agreement. Under the traditional criteria of liberal peacebuilding the agreement established a mutual cooperation and decommissioning of arms by paramilitary groups, thereby completing the objective of liberal peacebuilding: to end armed violence and make the conflicting groups come to the negotiating table (Goddard, 2012, p. 507). But looking at peacebuilding on a micro-level makes the complexity of peace much clearer, especially when looking at the case of post-conflict Belfast.

Picture 9: Looking down the Peace Wall on Cupar Way. Picture by authors.

Even though the Good Friday Agreement succeeded in breaking the cycle of many years of violence in Northern Ireland, the political outcome of the agreement marked disappointment for some in both communities. More radical Loyalist voices were disappointed as the Good Friday Agreement resulted in a relative disconnect between Northern Ireland and the other parts of the UK. Powersharing was seen as an infringement of Unionists' rights as both Protestants and Catholics now stood on an equal footing. Agreements made with the Republic of Ireland were seen as a compromise and reignited the fear of a potential united Ireland in a distant future, as this was a more viable possibility through political means, rather than through the violence of The Troubles (Goddard, 2012, pp. 501-504). On the other side, the more extremist minds in the Nationalist community were disappointed as Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom and under the jurisdiction of Westminster. Thus, the Good Friday Agreement put an end to the violence, but it also drew the various factions into a political stalemate of Northern Ireland's future (Goddard, 2012, p. 512).

Several scholars of post-conflict studies have criticised the Good Friday Agreement for its short-sightedness. The agreement was the first document to establish a long-lasting ceasefire in the history of The Troubles; an achievement it of course should be credited for. However, the agreement has, according to some scholars, failed to come up with a sustainable and mutually accepted plan for the country's future (Creary & Byrne, 2014, pp. 231-233). This dissatisfaction with the Good Friday Agreement is not only found amongst academics, but also shared with some locals of the Shankill Road. When we asked Marge at the ACT Women's Group meeting about her opinion of the Good Friday Agreement, Marge responded:

"*I signed up for the Good Friday Agreement, and I hoped that it would be equality. There is absolutely, definitely not equality, and there's not an acceptance of who I am or who this community is. And that has got so much worse from there. It has been a steady progress from there, to eradicate everything that's British.*" (Marge, 2022, [00:10:03]).

When Marge's quote is combined with Anthropologist David Scott's temporal approach to past periods of disruption, we see Marge still strongly influenced by events of the past, meaning that Marge's statement: *"[...] shows that the present can live with the past—even the not entirely resolved or resolvable past—in ways other than melancholia and in ways that potentially open the present to ethical-political intervention."* (Scott, 2014, p. 117). This lets us reflect on Marge as subject to temporal factors which influence her perception of her own varying realities that differ through her experiences of the past (life during The Troubles), perception of the present (consequences of the Good Friday Agreement) and hopes for the future (where Marge can cultivate her Britishness without harassment). These categorisations of time are all bound up to a notion of the present, Spring 2022, when we conducted our

interviews with Marge. The present is in many ways the most relatable temporal division, as it represents the temporal realm of acting and doing - the past has happened, the future is yet to come, the present is the conscious awareness and happening now (Scott, 2014, p. 1). When relating this to Marge we see that her disappointment of the outcome of the Good Friday Agreement navigates her present, in which actively performing her Britishness becomes the catalyst in Marge's identity and connection to the rest of the Shankill community:

"So we decided about five or six years ago that we would create that type of group [ACT Women's Group]*, grassroot Protestant and give them the space and the chance to talk about that, comfortable and safe. So we have done that for the last few years. Yeah, and we all have something in common. You know, we all come from a Loyalist stronghold."* (Marge, 2022, [00:00:02]).

Growing up on the Shankill Road during The Troubles, it is not hard to understand Marge's relation to the Good Friday Agreement: a relation created and defined in time, influenced by past experiences, the presence of political change, and hopes for another and better future. In other words, understanding Marge and our other interlocutors through various time categorisations, it challenges the research to consider: "*the threefold present: the present of the past, the present of the present, and the present of the future.*" (Scott, 2014, p. 69). Put in more simple manners, the present represents conscious awareness (awareness of one's own existence, thoughts, surroundings etc.), but this awareness is still influenced by both the past and the future. Past and future are still present in the present, as our past experiences and future hopes impact our awareness and will to act.

Using time as an analytical tool in post-conflict studies lets the researcher into a realm, from where we can try to grasp the extent of armed conflict and the following process of coming to terms with the atrocities that undeniably are a part of it. This section of our analysis will for the most part focus on the period after the Good Friday Agreement (1998 - present), as it defines the time of reconciliation and transformation into a functioning society. David Scott explains this when talking about the Grenada Revolution of 1979 and its aftermath:

> "*The way we conceive of the temporal connection between past social and political ills and injury, on the one hand, and the horizon of possible futures of social and political repair, on the other, is no longer what it was because the past is no longer imagined as a time that can be overcome.*" (Scott, 2014, p. 131).

What Scott is pointing to here is, that an individual's experience of a past period of violence also creates the individual's hopes for the future. But if the remembrance of the past period is shrouded in unresolvedness and meaninglessness, the past can become a hurdle of violent memories that are very hard to overcome. This is both true in Scott's Grenada revolution, as it is in our case of post-conflict Shankill and Belfast in general. Collective memories of past periods of violence and suffering becomes the temporal category that binds together the community of the Shankill. We clearly saw that when we asked Marge about the importance of visually representing the community's history through murals and memorial gardens in the Shankill:

> "*[...] if you look at it another way, it's a way of them confronting their trauma, their experience and dealing with it, rather than hiding it away. It happened for so long. You know, the memorials, the murals, the memorials, they're only really the last 20 years or*

so that they become prominent. You know, before that, there was nothing. [...] I think that's very important and remembering that and taking up their history and finding out so much more. And that has become very prominent. Well, for the last 20 years. And I think that's beneficial, because they're all older members to learn more about their history, confront their history and confront their trauma. Yeah, I think that's very important." (Marge, 2022, [00:30:19]).

6.2.2 Generations - Historical Events and Demographic Divisions of Time

When looking at our interlocutors contributing to this research through an optic of age, we can split them into two groups: Those born before or during The Troubles, and those born after the Good Friday Agreement was signed. The latter group has been widely dubbed as so-called 'ceasefire babies' (McKee, 2020). Ceasefire babies refers to the generation of young people being born after 1998 (post-Good Friday Agreement). This group has therefore not been directly impacted by the violence of The Troubles and are not carrying any personal remembrance of the conflict. But, as it should be clear by now, trauma and consequences do not cease with ceasefires. It is carried by individuals living through the conflict, and it can very easily spill over into the generations to come (Creary & Byrne, 2014, pp. 229-230).

In much of the studied literature on post-conflict Northern Ireland, which the theoretical foundation of this thesis builds upon, the interaction between generations plays an important role. In Creary and Byrne's article on youth violence in the country, the young people: *"[...] perceived that, while there was the need for continued economic stimulation and support of the peace process, disrupted communities, fractured self-images, and low self-esteem played a much larger role in the resurgence of youth violence in Northern Ireland."* But the same group of young respondents also: "[...] *saw the older generation playing a significant role in fuelling*

these misconceptions by transmitting their pain and trauma from the era of The Troubles onto a younger generation." (Creary & Byrne, 2014, pp. 232-233).

We can see multiple intergenerational accusations unfolding here. The older generation are accusing the younger generation as the ones carrying out antisocial behaviour in the form of rioting and criminal activities. The younger generation, on the other hand, are pointing to the older generation as the reproducers of trauma and dissatisfaction that produces and ignites antisocial behaviour. When we asked Abe about the unrest Northern Ireland has witnessed the last years, he replied:

> *"[T]here has been a lot of atrocities in Northern Ireland, but I feel there is… there is a grown concern that a lot of the… for want of a better word… the younger ones are just… it's the younger ones coming through… and they don't have as much what you call 'ground sense'… that's the ones I would look after…"* (Abe, 2022, [00:17:13]).

When asked the same question, Marge further backed Abe's opinion:

> *"Young people. Yeah, definitely young people. Because there was serious rioting up at the Crumlin. I live up there now. There was serious rioting there. It was just terrible to see, it was sad to see. I didn't like that at all. That was on the back of the protocol* [Protocol 16 on Brexit] *and it was all young, very young people. It was like… we were on the ground trying to stop people because it wasn't right. You know, young people going to jail again for what?! You know, if you want to do something active, get involved in your community in a positive way and lobby and do something constructive, you know?"* (Marge, 2022, [00:13:35])

In both answers we see the interlocutors pointing to young people as the creators of civil unrest. But when we posed the same questions to our young interlocutors, the answer was different:

> "*So I do think young people have a lot of give on what they can make, but it's also sometimes like puppets because there's still those older people that have that control. Like down at Lanark Way it was disgusting the amount of older people that were there and encouraging young people to throw bricks and throw stones and stuff like that, and they still have control. So as much as young people have this freedom and have like this new way of doing things in society, there's always that control, whether it be paramilitaries, whether it be politicians, whatever.*" (Maggie, 2022, [00:20:20])

When the above answers are put into perspective with each other, an interesting point of conflicting opinions arise. Why are civil unrest and antisocial behaviour reigniting in the country? Are the older generation's trauma and constant presence of The Troubles a factor? Does social injustice, deprivation and lack of future possibilities play a role? In trying to answer these questions, it is fruitful to make use of generational theory by German Sociologist Karl Mannheim. Mannheim's theory encourages us to understand generations as not defined by age, but by cohorts formed through a shared perception of a given historical event, meaning that:

> "*[...] integrated age cohorts that constitute successive (and overlapping) generations acquire frameworks of collective identity, as well as modes of connecting memories of the past to expectations for the future by virtue of their location in relation to eventful collective experience, such as wars, riots, revolutions, natural catastrophes, and the like.*" (Scott, 2014, pp. 71-72).

6.2.3 Paramilitary Nostalgia and Peacekeeping

As shown in the first section of our analysis, segregation provides the base and rationale for paramilitary groups, as they situate themselves as community peacekeepers to this day. This section will prove how paramilitary activity on the Shankill today is legitimised through a temporal notion of nostalgic longing. In our case of the community of the Shankill, the two generations (pre- and post-Good Friday Agreement) are differentiating in what historical experiences they are formed around and thereby respectively defining them. The older generation of the Shankill inhabitants forms around The Troubles itself: experiences of living through the violence and horrors of the conflict. The younger generation, on the other hand, can be said to form around the aftermath of the conflict: the times of reparation, justice, and transformation. As this period is still very much ongoing, we do not perceive it the same way as we do with The Troubles, which is generally understood through a teleological notion of start and end. This does not mean that the post-conflict period as a historical event is less legitimate than the period of The Troubles. Post-conflict periods can very much be the defining event that creates a generational cohort, as members of this generation: *"[...] experience some of the same historical events but at different points in their lives and therefore in relation to different memories of the past, different evaluations of the present, and different expectations for the future."* (Scott, 2014, pp. 85-86).

When trying to make sense of the older generation's connection to the past, Scott postulates that the generation, experiencing an armed conflict first-hand and the political turmoil that follows, grows a personified relationship to the past. In Scott's understanding, the experienced loss of a political cause can be juxtaposed with the loss of a loved one. Citing Freud's definition of trauma, the older generation of the Shankill are:

"[...] recognizing the irreversible reality of the death of the loved one (or, again, the loved ideal), the painfully simple fact that he or she no longer exists, is compelled "at great expense of time and cathectic energy" to withdraw his or her investment of desire from the lost object while in the meantime the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged." (Scott, 2014, pp. 100-101).

We saw this tendency of a personified relationship to the past in many of our interlocutors belonging to the older generation. When we asked Marge whether the Loyalist society of Northern Ireland should acknowledge the paramilitary groups as security and peacekeepers during The Troubles, she lit up in a smile and replied:

"Absolutely. Paramilitary groups were called on the streets. I was born in 70, so it all just kicked off. They were called on the streets then by local representatives, so-called, in this community. But your local representatives were different then. They were from this community. That has evolved into people we don't even know, they don't care for us anymore. And they [paramilitaries] *were heroes in this community. They were respected. They done what needed to be done. And… and then the peace process started, and then our own community became… a wee bit disconnected with paramilitaries because they signed up to the Good Friday Agreement. A lot of people did, and I did. I just had a child in 1997. I thought: 'I want a better future for my child', and I did sign up for that. But we didn't realise, at that time, we were signing so much of who we were away. And then the community has kind of turned on the paramilitaries for doing that. You know, for… for selling them out, for accepting peace with all these*

deals. But, I think there weren't… they were sold a very different story to what we have today." (Marge, 2022, [00:04:50]).

At the focus group interview with the ACT Women's Group, Patty further backed Marge's memory of paramilitary security during The Troubles:

"[...] there was nothing to fill that gap. You know. They [paramilitaries] *have moved on and the PSNI was supposed to fill that gap and they definitely are not filling that gap. I mean if your house was broken into now they just give you a crime number they wouldn't even come out. And you'll see mobs of young ones running up and down the Shankill, so they do in big, big, large groups. And they're bating* [beating up] *their own community and there's many from Ardoyne that come along with ones from the Shankill."* (Patty, ACT Women's, 2022, [00:03:03])

It is striking how Marge and Patty's answers seem to encircle a sense of security in a time of disruption. The paramilitaries on both sides during The Troubles were frontrunners in carrying out shootings and bombings against the opposite side. But at the same time, to the older Shankill inhabitants, armed Loyalist groups such as the UDA and UVF were understood as the peacekeepers of the community. But we also found it interesting how these interlocutors seem to oversee the connection between youth violence and crime, and the presence of paramilitary today. In their article on youth violence in the country, Creary and Byrne point out that especially young Northern Irish men post-Good Friday Agreement seemed to engage in paramilitary groups because it: *"[...] created the opportunities for youth to get the respect and protection that they craved in a postwar environment, despite their functions as negative*

communities that worked to erode peaceful social organization." (Creary & Byrne, 2014, p. 233).

To put it more plainly, both Marge and Patty seem to remember the paramilitary days of the Shankill through a temporal nostalgic longing for respect and order. They seem to connect their experience of being young and feeling protected by paramilitaries through positive reminiscence. Even though most of our older interlocutors acknowledged the fact that these same groups providing protection in the community also were responsible for killing innocent people (Homer, 2022, [00:55:52]), the temporal past experience of feeling protected seems to colour the memory. The older generation's collective memory seems to be: *"locked in a melancholia in which the past only returns as nostalgia."* (Scott, 2014, p. 126). Creary and Byrne point out that this notion of trying to make sense of the past, by perceiving the paramilitary as a vital part of society, spills from the older generation into the younger. Due to social deprivation in the country, young men are recruited into the paramilitary groups in a search for purpose in life:

"*Protestant-Unionist and Catholic-Nationalist youth today who have heard stories about the experiences of their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles during The Troubles become stuck with the oppression and enraging trauma of the past as the experiences are relived and retold by elders who transmit these experiences to younger generations. However, what used to be a politically motivated struggle is now seemingly directionless or is being hijacked by splinter groups and radical ideologies, which have found fertile breeding grounds within localized and habitualized acts of violence. Youth violence researchers and therapists have noted that powerlessness and alienation from community can be a significant source of devaluation that propels*

young people to engage in antisocial behavior and drastically increases the potential

for violence." (Creary & Byrne, 2014, p. 238).

Picture 10: Ulster Volunteer Force paramilitary mural on Shankill Road. Picture by authors.

6.2.4 'The Wee Uns' - A New Approach to the Historical Past

The historical experience of the younger generation is of course a result of the older

generation's experience - a postmemory (elaborated in Chapter 3). But the generational gap

between the so-called cohorts gives the younger generation a possibility to work with the

conflict, where the older might view it as a contentious topic. This is very well formulated by

David Scott in his analysis of the Grenada Revolution. The generation of the Grenada

Revolution whose hopes and longings were tied to the "*emancipationist narrative,*" whose

experience of the past was linked to their expectations for their future. This loss was

insurmountable, and they are

"[...] paralyzed by a stupefying and aggrieved silence, locked in a melancholia in which the past only returns as nostalgia. [...] The Young Leaders [younger generation] *have only a "postmemory" of October 1983, and they tend, it is true, to rehearse the history of the collapse of the People's Revolutionary Government in a somewhat unquestioning way. They are the first postrevolutionary generation in Grenada, and for this very reason they do not inhabit the same social framework of memory, the same temporal habitus, as their parents. Consequently, they do not experience the loss of 1983 as a fundamental rupture, a disorientation of their very mode of expectation of possible futures."* (Scott, 2014, p. 126)

What Scott is pointing to here is that the younger generation of a post-conflict society has a completely different approach to the conflict. Not having experienced the conflict first-hand, their perception, or postmemory, are manifested in stories and memories passed down to them from the older generation. In our study of the post-conflict Shankill, the younger generation have an urge to revisit their parents' trauma in trying to make their own sense of the Shankill's history, because: " *[...] they are children of another era of expectation that is characterized not by the loss of the past [...] but by the aftermaths of that loss, an aftermaths defined by the active and systematic delegitimization, even criminalization, of the past.*" (Scott, 2014, p. 123).

During our interview with youth workers Maggie and Bart, it became apparent what impact time had on how the locals of the Shankill Road perceive their own community. When asked to reflect upon what unique impressions seemed to categorise the community, Maggie hastily replied:

"All the things that are close and local to me whereas some other people, they say, Shankill is like a shithole. Like they literally go 'scum, scumbags', and stuff like that. [...] And that's just the bad rep [reputation] *that it gets because of the history and the past and stuff like that. People are like: 'Oh, you're from Shankill, you're not going to go anywhere' or anything like that, and I got that from being from the Shankill and going to uni."* (Maggie; NBAP, 2022, [00:04:16])

What differentiates Maggie's impression of her community from impressions made by members of the older generation, is that Maggie seems to be influenced by the stigma performed by the outgroup. Stigmatisation is of course also very much a part of the older generation's perception of the Shankill (Homer, 2022, [00:14:25]). But it is impossible to isolate the older interlocutors' community perception from notions of trauma and first-hand lived experiences of life on the Shankill during The Troubles. The younger interlocutors, on the other hand, have their community perception formed by narratives and memories passed to them from parents and grandparents. They have no first-hand experience of life during The Troubles, but they are born into a community where the conflict is still very much leaving its trace, both socially and visually. These narratives are further accompanied by external stigmatisation, as we see in Maggie's statement about coming from the Shankill and going to university.

Maggie and Bart's occupations as youth workers in the Shankill community can be pinpointed as an attempt to contribute to the transformation of the community. Borrowing from Political Scientist Tobias Kelly's research on inter-conflict Palestine, Maggie and Bart are striving for the more mundane life as an act of rebellion in a post-conflict society (Kelly, 2008, p. 365). Belonging to the so-called 'ceasefire baby'-generation, Maggie and Bart grew up in Belfast

where armed violence was in decline, but the effects and aftermath of the conflict is still very much felt. They can therefore be understood to be actively performing 'acts of mundanity' (going to university, doing community work, countering paramilitary activity) to play their individual part in transforming the community into a functional and sustainable part of Northern Irish society. Their choice and acting are expressions of rebellion against the older generation, who seem to them to be 'stuck in the past'.

Bart stands out particularly from our other interlocutors, as he is the only Catholic. Growing up in the Catholic neighbourhood of Ardoyne, Bart has lived in close proximity to the Protestant Shankill his entire life. Not before the age of 16 did he have his first cross-community experience through the youth work organisation he is now working for. The hatred between the respectively Catholic and Protestant community became clear to us when we asked Bart about his impression of the Shankill before his cross-community experience:

> *"I hated it. I hated it. If you asked me why – I have no idea. I have no clue. Just because of the community I was surrounded by my friends and stuff like that there. If you asked me when I was 14: did I hate the Shankill? – yes. Tell me why? - I don't know. We didn't have a clue. We were just growing up that way, to hate. And that is all it was. I wasn't growing up in the household to hate. It was just the people I was surrounded with growing up. I was brought up to hate by my friends and stuff. But as I said you ask me why, we don't know. No one knew why. Just because they were Protestants."* (Bart, NBAP, 2022, [00:31:52])

This quote from Bart states that the ethnic conflict amongst the communities of Belfast is not only a reproduction of the older generation's trauma and memories of the past, but also

maintained between members of the young generation. Though Bart learned from home not to hate, relations between young men in the divided communities become a factor in maintaining the hate and stereotyping between the communities. This stigmatisation and 'othering' of different communities thereby becomes a: *"[...] product of postwar situations where youth have developed strong identities based on the protection of their communities, ethnic conflict, and resistance to state oppression."* (Creary & Byrne, 2014, p. 222). Combining Bart's imagined perception of the Shankill community with Creary and Byrne's research on youth violence in Northern Ireland, we see clear evidence, that the young people's contempt with communities external of their own, is not only passed down from the older generation, but also produced between members of the younger generation themselves. This othering of different communities can therefore not be said to be solely handed top-down from one generation to another, but instead is maintained through intergenerational relationships, forming: *"[...] repeating loops of anguish, confusion, and rage that paralyze their political will and that can be channeled only through a recriminatory demand to settle old scores [...]."* (Scott, 2014, p. 122).

6.2.5 Trauma - A National Epidemic

As the final part of this analysis section, we will look at how mental illness provoked by conflict can be passed down through time. It forms an interesting picture as these forms of illnesses don't seem to be restricted to people who experienced life during The Troubles but are also passed to young people with no direct experience of the conflict. Towards the end of our interview with Abe at the Mountainview Tavern, Abe seemed to start feeling safer in our company. Before we ended the interview, he wanted to let us in on a secret he at the time had not shared with many before:

"Two years ago on the 31st December, I hung myself. And I know I was caught on the right time when I was lifted from here to Enniskillen, to the main trauma unit that they have in Enniskillen.... I... spent, it was 3 weeks or something, in Enniskillen, was moved to Belfast to the RVH [Royal Victoria Hospital]*, spend a fortnight there, and then moved for another 4 weeks to Musgrave Park* [Hospital in Derry~Londonderry] *for the retraining of the brain and psychology. And... hadn't come out of that, I know there's not enough.... I've seen a lot of people in there..."* (Abe, 2022, [01:12:59])

Though it is not apparent in Abe's quote, it is important to bear in mind that Abe was an army serviceman during The Troubles. He was respondent to various terrorist bombings of civilian targets, for example the 1987 Enniskillen Bombing, resulting in the death of 12 people and injuring many more. He told us that he never really got over the trauma of what he experienced during the conflict. The trauma of the conflict was also clear in our interview with Marge:

"So my, my children say I'm weird and they don't know anybody like me. But it's because they never understood what I had gone through and I couldn't get to grips with that either. Why am I weird? Why do my kids think I'm weird when I'm not? So definitely that trauma, and my daughter suffers real bad anxiety. I was pregnant with my daughter, when we were... there was a feud on the Shankill Road, and we had to leave the home. That was in 2001. We had to leave our home. I do firmly believe that the effects of what I was feeling went through when I was carrying her. She still suffers today, and she has passed that, that's her young son there [pointing to her grandchild]. *I know she has passed to her son as well."* (Marge, 2022, [00:13:59])

Trauma as shown both in Abe and Marge's cases becomes a temporal leftover from the past. Using Freud's definition of trauma combined with a sense of time lets us understand that:

> *" [...] psychological trauma is nothing but a past that will not go away, a past that returns, unbidden, involuntarily, to haunt or unsettle or somehow mangle the present. [...], trauma is a memory disorder. Again, not so very long ago, what the past produced was social oppression and inequality, economic exploitation, and political discrimination—that is, forms of injustice in the relations that constitute a community."* (Scott, 2014, p. 13).

Voicing both Scott and Freud, the trauma of the past conflict manifests itself as a painful memory. Trauma in this sense is understood as based on the loss of an object of affection, whether this be the loss of a loved person or a political cause, because: *"[...] the past was a social fact; now, however, it is a pathological one. The past is a wound that will not heal. What the past produces now are inward, psychic harms and injuries to an individual sense of self and a collective sense of identity. "*(Scott, 2014, p. 13).

It is not only in the responses of our interlocutors we see the legacy of the conflict manifesting itself as a trauma. Many articles from the past few years have brought some tragic information about the country into the light. With 25% more cases of mental illnesses than English men, men in Northern Ireland have one of the highest ratings of mental health issues, not only in the UK, but on a global scale (Yeginsu, 2019). Also the suicide rate amongst Northern Irish men is topping the global statistics on suicide. As of 2018 around 4,500 suicides were registered in the region since the signing of The Good Friday Agreement. The death toll of the 30 years of The Troubles has been estimated to be 3,600 (McDonald, 2018). These numbers in perspective

to each other reveals a saddening fact: More people have killed themselves in 20 years after the end of the conflict, than people who died as a result of 30 years of violence during The Troubles. Both Yeginsu and McDonald point to that the country's ratings on mental health issues and suicides are undeniably a result of post-conflict trauma. The trauma of the conflict can therefore be concluded to still be very much part of Northern Irish society.

6.2.6 Sub-Conclusion

Time has definitely had a lasting impact on the community of Shankill. The past especially seems to narrate the present, as it presents itself through trauma in the older generation experiencing life during The Troubles. The trauma manifests itself especially in the older generation, making the trauma near to impossible to overcome. As the trauma is still very deeply rooted in the community and thereby becomes a vital part of the Shankill's collective identity formed by the past. War-time memories in the older generation seem to return in a notion of nostalgic longing for the days where paramilitaries patrolled the streets of Greater Shankill, offering the locals a sense of security in a time of disruption. This glorification of paramilitary groups becomes problematic in a post-conflict community such as the Shankill where elements of social deprivation, lack of education and work are part of everyday life.

Picture 11: Caledon Street. Picture by authors.

Young men in the Shankill are especially vulnerable, as many paramilitary groups have turned into criminal splinter groups, but still making use of political narratives that legitimised their existence as community peacekeepers in the first place during The Troubles. In an attempt to gain power, wealth, and authority, young people engage in paramilitary activity that still is shrouded in political discourse, establishing the paramilitaries as defenders of the Protestant communities of Northern Ireland. But due to the criminality within the groups, paramilitarism is only furthering the stigmatisation of the Shankill.

As we see in Marge's statement above, she herself understands her trauma not only as psychologically embedded in her own memory of the past, but also as a biological disease passed from her to her daughter and from there on to her grandson. In terms of generations, we see that post-conflict trauma is not only restricted to individuals with first-hand memories of The Troubles, but also to individuals born after the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. Therefore it can be concluded that trauma, understood through a notion of time, is not chained to one's generation, but it operates on an intergenerational scale. In this sense, the trauma of the past is passed through time and thereby becomes the younger generation's *trauma of the present*.

6.3 Chapter 3: Acting for Miracles

This final chapter of the analysis will focus on hope in the context of the Shankill community. So far we have analysed the impact that space and segregation, and generational trauma and tragedy, has had on the formation of the Shankill community. This section will focus primarily on the younger generation of the Shankill and how hope thrives in adversity and is an ignition spark for action amongst the youth. So far in the analysis of the ethnographic material, it may not appear that hope is explicitly visible in the Shankill community. However, there is no doubt

that the people that are born and bred on the Shankill have dreams and aspirations of what the people in their community can achieve and how the Shankill can be changed in accordance with what they are hoping for. Hope may not always encourage actions which appear to the outside to be positive, but they are in accordance with what the younger generation wishes to achieve and in line with how they envisage their future. Hope is therefore a relevant avenue in which to explore the community of the Shankill. This chapter will argue that the adverse circumstances of the Shankill can shape hope for the younger generation and define how hope is manifested in their actions.

6.3.1 'Back in My Day' - The Older Generation

Although a lot of hope for the future is pinned as the responsibility of the younger generation, many of the older generation that we spoke to expressed they felt the community was heading in the wrong direction, and that this was the fault of young people. Several were reminiscent of the past and how they acted in the community when they were of that age. The community and community feeling had undergone a lot of change. Edna explained what she felt was different about the community during her youth and now: *"It's not the same sense of safety. There's no sense of community. It's just, the kids run riot. Which they didn't then because you know they had a fear of the organisations* [paramilitaries]*."* (Edna, ACT Women, 2022, [00:01:40]). Marge echoed this viewpoint:

> "*It's just a different breed now. But growing up with paramilitaries and in paramilitary times I wouldn't say, control but protection, there was a lot more respect. There's still community resilience and respect now. But not in a paramilitary sense because they have moved on. So it's a different level now. So that respect that we had growing up isn't there now.*" (Marge, ACT Women, 2022, [00:02:24])

Perhaps the older generation hold a certain opinion of today's young people as they are directly comparing their youth and their behaviour, which was during totally different circumstances of conflict and paramilitary control, to the youth today which have grown up under very different circumstances. Patty expressed that there was nothing to fill the gap left by the paramilitaries and that this gap was not filled by the PSNI so bad behaviour is prevalent with no control or consequence from a higher authority (see pp. 89-90 for full quotation).

This seeming hopelessness and worry that the older generation embody can actually be understood as a manifestation of hope. In this sense they are passive and accepting the *"contingent interdetermancy"* (Webb, 2007, as cited in Turner, 2015, p. 176) of the future. Worrying and fear are deeply intertwined in hope; there cannot be hope without fear. Hage argues *"hope is like a combination of desire for and fear of the future in which the desire for the future is more dominant."* (Hage, 2003, p. 24). It may seem contradictory that hope exists in apparent hopelessness, but if the Shankill is understood as a "carrying society" (Hage, 2003, p. 3), it creates the sensation of hope within this generation that cares so deeply for it and worries for it. Worrying and caring are a manifestation of hope, even if in this case it is passive and inactive.

The older generation expresses that the circumstances in which the younger generation are currently growing up are much different to their own. The difference between the concrete past which they have experienced further expresses that today's youth are growing up in a liminal space; they are between a troubled past and an uncertain future. Turner explains that the uncertainty of the liminality of the circumstances in which the Burundian refugees find themselves after leaving their homeland means that they must focus on a future which is

different from their present, their past, and a future that they may have once thought of for themselves. This is in order to give clarity and direction to their present; thus hope is used as a tool through which to navigate the present (Turner, 2015, pp. 174-175). In the context of the Shankill Road, the young generation lives in a space of post-conflict and postmemory and thus in liminality as the peace process has not per se been realised in the segregated society of Northern Ireland. This time period in between conflict and peace can be described as liminal, especially in regard to the generation of ceasefire babies who neither have experience of conflict nor peace.

6.3.2 "Where there's Life there's Hope" - Social Deprivation in the Shankill

The socio-economic environment of the Shankill road may paint a picture of hopelessness for the future generations. We asked Lisa her opinion as to why young people are engaging in anti-social behaviour: *"I think a lack of education. I think in the last census of the Shankill only 51% of students were coming out of school with GCSEs. 51% which is horrible. Horrific. Lack of investment again."* (Lisa, 2022, [00:38:24]). According to the 2011 census, 51.8% of Shankill residents have no qualifications; in comparison to the national average of persons with no qualifications, which is 29% (NISRA, 2019). The Shankill is in dire need of education funding in order to provide greater prospects for future generations.

The Shankill ranks highly on the national social deprivation scale which measures educational attainment, access to housing, poverty, and crime rates amongst other markers (NISRA, 2017). How can hope for the future thrive in such conditions one may ask? One possible answer is again with the grassroots organisations. Alternatives, ACT, and NBAP work with educating people through less traditional avenues than the school system, which may not be the best

environment in which for some people to thrive. Lisa expanded on the work that Alternatives do with education and young people:

> *"We look at various things: through our START project it's employability. It looks at young people and how we can empower them when formal education isn't necessarily the right channel for them to go through. Look at their different skills and how we can empower them as young people and give them the confidence to go out and get their essential skills in terms of their English and their Maths. We had a young man in here last year, who was 17 and couldn't say the alphabet at all. And now he works in TransLink* [bus service]*, he works on one of the buses, and he's just doing absolutely amazing. So employability with young people is really, really important."* (Lisa, 2022, [00:11:08])

It may seem by looking at the statistics that prospects for the young people of the Shankill are few and far between. Hage explains the phenomenon of hope existing in adverse situations: *"This kind of hopefulness emerges most clearly when humans are confronting desperate situations"* (Hage, 2003, p. 24). He also argues the state has the potential to extinguish this type of hopefulness. However, the hope created in the Shankill by those who care for it as a society, is expressed within the community and channelled through grassroots organisations. This support is very sizable and accessible to all whereas formal education may not be. Turner argues that suffering in the present means that hope for the future can be held onto and in fact is a necessity (Turner, 2015, p. 176). If the socio-economic situation of the Shankill can be described as suffering in the present, then this would be an understandable way in which the grassroots community organisations centre their work around actions in the present to create a more positive future. By taking these actions in the present to prepare youth in education and

employability the community is actively *"...preparing for the future - and hence administering hope"* (Turner, 2015, p. 179).

6.3.3 Politically Mute and Moot

Many of our interlocutors expressed bitterness at the lack of political representation the area had in the Northern Irish Assembly. When we visited ACT, Moe, the founder of the organisation told us that their local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), whose office was a few doors down from the centre, had never set foot in the building. The Secretary of State had been there once. Patty explained:

> *"Well, first of all… you don't really actually see many of them* [politicians] *at the door… the senator… But if you are lucky enough, I actually met an MLA at one time, and it was election year and I told him a few truths that don't think he represented me. I think that it just doesn't work with working class Loyalists, be quite true. And he says, 'Well, if you don't vote for me where you live, the Sinn Féin is going to get it.' Now, at that time, I said, 'You're right. Unfortunately, I'll have to vote for somebody like you, you know?' But see, this time I'm absolutely cornered. And as I say, my morals hit rock bottom. With our politicians that I may actually turn around this time and say, 'Well, no, I'm not voting for none of these, they've done nothing for us."* (Patty, ACT, 2022, [00:12:01])

This feeling was reiterated in many of our interviews. At ACT Carl, Selma, and Marge told us that they thought that the Republican side was very well represented in local politics and that after the Good Friday Agreement, Republican ex-prisoners had a direct route into politics whereas Loyalist ex-prisoners were branded as outcasts and shunned from politics as Loyalism

became an identity associated with violence and paramilitarism and the Protestant vote was therefore taken by Unionists who represented the middle-class Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Picture 12: 'Nothing about us without us is for us …'. Picture by authors.

The dearth of political representation in the Shankill means that grassroots organisations, such as ACT, NBAP, and Alternatives, gain traction and attention with means that seem more realistic and tangible to the people of the community than political action does. Turner suggests that pinning hope for the future on a concrete goal from a higher authority leads to hopelessness and disappointment (Turner, 2015, p. 175). The political tactic which Patty describes in the above quotation can be equated to what Turner describes as 'statecraft' (Turner, 2015, p. 177) in turning hope into a commodity in which to take advantage of the liminal situation of citizens. Playing into 'tit for tat' voting, in this particular case, attempts to force Loyalist voters to vote for a Unionist party which does not represent them. By combatting this political disillusionment

and working from the bottom-up on the ground with the Shankill community, hope can be formed and found throughout the Shankill in the productive work by grassroots organisations towards a more positive future. The community in this sense embodies collective hope, which is *"genuinely and critically shared by the group"* (Turner, 2015, p. 177) by taking their future into their own hands and not presuming that politicians will solve the area's problems. If the Shankill is understood as a society in itself, and not in relation to Northern Irish society as a whole, this care, and thus hope, that it distributes among its members is manifested as actions for change in which the residents view as a more positive and better future.

6.3.4 An Uncertain Future

The hope which Turner refers to is "open-ended" hope which is the hope of the individual towards something positive and unspecific, this is "*an ontology of becoming rather than being"* (Turner, 2015, p. 175). This open-ended hope is something that was apparent in many of our interviews. We asked Maggie and Bart how they thought the Shankill would look in 10 years in relation to the community and the Peace Lines:

> *"I think it's getting taken down. There's a new sort of area being built where the Peace Walls are. There's a lot of new housing and homes and stuff there. So I feel in the next 10 years they'll be completely gone."* (Bart, NBAP, 2022, [00:39:50])

> *"The smaller ones I think will go. But the bigger ones, I think it'll take 20, 40 years before they go anywhere. But community-wise it will be mad the way the opportunities that we'll be able to offer young people cause like how different it is now compared to when I was young it's ever changing. I mean, so I feel that as a community, it'll only get stronger."* (Maggie, NBAP, 2022, [00:40:00])

Bart and Maggie, as ceasefire babies, have an unspecific hope for the future. They do not know what will happen or when the walls will be taken down, but they have certainty that the future *"will be of positive worth"* (Webb, 2007, as cited in Turner, 2015, p. 176) compared to the past and that change is happening now and will continue to happen. It is also interesting that they have never lived without interfaces, so they are striving for a future previously unknown to them and uncertain, and hope thrives in uncertainty. Working towards a goal which is not fixed and cannot be easily measured does not inhibit their work in the present towards positivity in the future: in fact it motivates them. They explain that their work is reactive and intuitive (Maggie, NBAP, 2022 [00:27:00]) meaning that they do not work with set solutions for problems; they work with young people's changing needs in a tailored way to ensure they get the best support from youth work as possible. Having this hope for the future while working in unpredictable situations, encapsulates the hope of the Shankill as it moves further away in time from its troubled past.

When we asked our older interlocutors what they thought the future of the Shankill would look like they also expressed open-ended hope. Abe shared with us a similar hope:

> *"And you look at yourself and say… I'm 62… I hope they have a better life. I'm not saying I had a bad life… but, I hope they have a different life that… like, it used to be…. you know… years ago you had to check your car, you had to check this, you have to check that…."* (Abe, 2022, [00:24:39]).

He is here referring to having to check under cars for bombs during The Troubles. For the older generation the wish was that their children and the future generations of the Shankill would not

have to go through what they went through growing up. This hope is for a future better than the present that they envisaged for themselves. To relate this to what Turner describes as suffering in the present to generate hope for the future (Turner, 2015, p. 176), the older generation suffered in the past, they still suffer with the trauma of The Troubles in the present, and they project this suffering as hope for a better future for the next generations. This future may be unobtainable for themselves within their lifetime, but they hope for the young people of the Shankill to have futures different to what they imagine for themselves.

6.3.5 Reaching Across the Barricades

Another way in which the older generation expressed their hope for the younger generation was in what they chose to share with their children about The Troubles. They wished for change and for younger generations not to share the same perspectives about the 'other side'. They envisaged a life for their children different to their own, thus expressing hope through the action of choosing what they share about the past in an attempt to shape the future in a certain way. We spoke to the ACT Women's Group about this:

> *"I mean you don't want your children to be having hatred. You want them to be able to go on and have a normal life as possible, but you also have to make them aware of how to feel safe at night."* (Alison, ACT Women, 2022 [00:12:36]).

> *"I only made that decision in the last couple of years because... I wouldn't call myself a bigot, but I definitely have a certain feeling towards the other community. And my kids, as all kids of that age now think, it doesn't matter to them. Like my kids have Catholic friends but I struggled to understand that cause growing up I never had a Catholic friend. I didn't work with a Catholic until I was an adult and was working at*

Queen's [University]. *And even then that was a big fear 'cause I'd spent 30 years of them trying to kill Protestants."* (Marge, ACT Women, 2022, [00:12:50]).

The women actively chose what they shared with their children about their personal experiences during The Troubles in order not to pass down the feelings they had towards the other side, which came from their experiences or lack thereof. They want to avoid a reproduction of sectarianism in the next generation and to not pass down trauma by oral history in the hope that the next generation will have a clean and unbiased slate on which to build their futures. Marge reiterated this in our follow-up interview with her:

"Yeah, but it [The Troubles] *definitely leaves a lasting impact, that I actively decided not to tell my children all about that. I think it was wrong. So maybe in the last five or so years from, I've started to talk about that within this group, that I've talked to them and to my children. Yeah. And they… they find it…. they say I am weird. Because I still do have a fear of Catholic people, okay? Of their Catholic friends. I don't dislike them, I don't hate them. I just fear, because that whole fear growing up. And, you know, three times, five times Republicans try to kill my father and two of them when we were at home."* (Marge, 2022, [00:13:59])

This shows the generational gap between the older and younger generations when it comes to mixing with the other side. Marge does harbour some fear towards the Catholic community as a result of events in her youth. However, she does not have an issue with her children mixing with Catholics. Despite the protection measures that parents take with trying not to pass down trauma or resentment, it can still be manifested as a product of the segregated environment in which they live. Maggie and Bart shared their feelings about the other side before they had a

cross-community experience and became involved in youth work. Bart, who grew up in Catholic Ardoyne, explained that he hated Protestants and he did not know why before he was engaged in cross-community work (see p. 95 for full quotation). The unknown was a fear for him and a source of hatred.

As argued in Chapter 1, segregation creates mistrust between communities and makes crossing community boundaries more difficult. Growing up in segregated communities creates a lack of understanding and thus a fear of the other side. The hope that we came across in the Shankill was that of community cohesion for a better and more integrated future. Mutual understanding of a shared past was a hope we came across when we spoke to ACT, NBAP, Alternatives, and individuals. If urban peacebuilding can be seen as a possible solution to Belfast's segregation and sectarian problems in contrast to its current state and unresolved issues as a result of liberal peacebuilding, then it is evident that intercommunity cooperation and cohesion is paramount to achieve peace and thus a better future (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 217).

6.3.6 Integration as Integral

For our older interlocutors, cross-community was not something they experienced in a positive way in their youth or experienced at all. Alison and Edna shared stories of how they only had their first encounter with a Catholic when they started working in the city, after their youth. In our interview with Carl, Selma, and Marge we asked about their cross-community experiences:

> *"As Marge, I would have seen Catholics across the divide… because I was throwing stones at them, and they were throwing stones at me from when I was no age. So probably first experience of meeting Catholics and being friendly with Catholics was like Marge at work, from work experience. So serving apprenticeship and getting to*

know people and you know, take it from there. So after that, the prison years, you seen Republicans in jail, you had to work with them at times because it was a prison experience. But… Moving forward, from perhaps the first experience of Catholics to almost 50 years later, and the difference now and society out there to what I had lived in growing up is absolutely night and day.” (Carl, ACT, 2022, [00:14:56]).

Carl's experience of the Catholic community was formed by his experiences growing up and as a young man dedicated to the Loyalist cause by partaking in paramilitary activities. He can see the difference even in his own interactions with Catholics now from back then. Looking at it in this way we can see that experiences and surroundings heavily influence feelings towards the other community. In this light it can be understood that there is hope for the future generations to be more open and mix with the other side as their opinions and mindsets are formed in a space of postmemory, allowing space and time for feelings of hurt and resentment that their parents and grandparents felt to heal over time and not to be reproduced in their own lives.

24 years after the Good Friday Agreement, cross-community has become increasingly a part of Northern Irish society. Across the country cross-community programmes have a bigger role, in the workplace, community centres and participation in programmes is even mandatory in primary and secondary schools. Young people today are a lot more likely to encounter someone from the other community than their parents' and grandparents' generation would have been. Bart explained that he could even see this change during his own childhood:

“When I was growing up I didn't have much group stuff or anti-social behaviour or anything like that there cause I was always in the youth centre. There was never enough

programmes or opportunities offered for me. I feel like that was the big change for me. But as I was getting older when I hit about 16 or 17 I started to come here, I just felt then there were more opportunities for me then. I didn't do a cross-community programme till I was 16 years old so growing up I always had a different aspect in life of what Protestants were like and stuff like that there but as you get older you just realise everyone's the same, everyone's just wanting to get on with life so the difference for me is there's just more opportunities for young people now." (Bart, NBAP, 2022, [00:17:04]).

This is concrete hope for the future. In the section above we see that Bart's mentality towards the other side completely changed after being engaged in cross-community projects. These projects encourage understanding between two divided communities which have a shared history. Understanding leads to respect and a more productive and positive future for all the citizens in Northern Ireland. It is a way of putting past differences and grievances aside in order to work together for the change that is needed on both sides. This cannot happen through a political peace process unless the people going through their everyday lives, feel at peace with the other side and with the past. Marge describes her views on cross-community work and its importance:

"Talking and listening more, exploring each other's cultures, respecting each other's differences and cultures more. The more we know and the more they know that… what we do, what we believe, what we love is no threat to what you believe and love and are… so yeah, more talking, more community dialogue, more and having more groups in and respecting each other's conversations and heritage." (Marge, ACT, 2022 [00:14:28]).

Community work and youth work, as previously stated, is reactionary and is carried out in unpredictable circumstances. This means that cross-community work is ever changing as well. It is now encompassing more communities than just Catholic and Protestant:

> *"But I feel the cross-community something that's really, really important because if you get it in youth work, then you're prepared for when you're working, because you see when you go to work, you're working with everybody. And it's not just Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, it's literally everybody. So I think youth work prepares you in every way for life, not only for working and where you're going in the future, but just those skills and interests and how you can handle yourself as a person."* (Maggie, NBAP, 2022, [00:32:35])

Cross-community work encompasses the wider communities that now exist on the Shankill. Barriers for understanding people that are different from one's self are being broken down, which gives hope for the future of the Shankill to be a welcoming and less homogenous place of white, Protestant, Loyalists in a society that is now home to a mix of different ethnicities and religions. Hope is present that the Shankill can be a more progressive and modern place to live.

Another way in which cross-community projects in the Shankill show hope for the future is that they are combating sectarian violence that young people are involved in currently at interfaces around the Shankill. The riots that took place at Lanark Way in Spring 2021 were initially cited as a reaction to Northern Ireland's position within the Union with the UK as a

result of Brexit. However, according to the press and many of our interlocutors who mentioned the violence it was mostly young people who were bored and had nothing better to do:

> *"Lanark Way started like that there on the Shankill. There was riots last year, which led onto riots the Springfield Road and it was literally both communities rioting for nothing, just literally nothing. They don't even know what they're rioting for. And there's still, then in this day and age, sectarian attacks and stuff like that there. So I feel it's* [cross-community work] *the most, probably the most important, key part of youth work. Especially in this place."* (Bart, NBAP, 2022, [00:30:38])

Maggie and Bart also said that they would have young people who were rioting down at Lanark Way come into the youth centre and interact in a positive way with members of the other community. It is a process of breaking down these barriers that will lead to more understanding, and hopefully in West Belfast, peace. This disdain for violence which we heard from all of our interlocutors shows that there is hope to move on from a past of conflict into a new territory of peace.

When it comes to cross-community projects in schools, this is really not the most productive way in which mutual-understanding of different backgrounds and peace can be achieved. Should schools not be cross-community from the offset? 71% of people in Northern Ireland think that integrated schools should be standard instead of schools segregated by religion (Wallace, 2021) and somehow this equates to only 7% of pupils in Northern Ireland enrolled in integrated schools which are constantly oversubscribed (Wallace, 2021). This feeling was voiced by many of our interlocutors, both old and young. Marge told us:

"I think they're [integrated schools] *a good thing. I do. I actually tried to get my 13-year-old last year and he didn't get a place. Because we live too far away from the integrated school. But I do think it's good, because that's what I said: You have to learn! You have to understand! If you're not knowing it, you are not going to understand it. You don't want to learn it and respect what each other stands for. And my 13-year-old asks a lot of questions, but I try my best to answer."* (Marge, 2022, [00:22:59]).

The hope for the future that the older generation displayed in their want for their children and future generations to attend mixed, integrated schools is a want for their children to grow up differently than they did: with an open mindset and not with opinions of the existence of a 'them' and 'us'. Björkdahl interprets Appadurai's concept of an ethnoscape which is relevant here: "*Ethnoscape evokes an intricate and dynamic relation between people (ethnos) and place (scape), including socio-cultural and subjective, spatial and temporal, as well as political dimensions of power.*" (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 214). The persisting ethnoscape of the Shankill is strengthened, as are those of the Falls Road or Ardoyne etc., as segregation continues to exist on multiple levels. These areas, left to become increasingly self-contained and inward looking as they are kept separate, are territorialised by their residents. If integrated schools became the norm, then these imagined barriers that have been strengthened over decades of segregation could be broken down and allow for actual inter-understanding and cooperation for the future generations. As argued in Chapter 1 of the analysis, the fear of unknown between ingroups and outgroups is a result of both physical boundaries and imagined boundaries. Segregation is not productive and especially in the school system, in which it teaches children that there is a difference between Catholics and Protestants merely by separating them. That parents are wanting this to happen for their children on the Shankill is an expression of hope for change.

6.3.7 Hope is the Spark that Lights the Fire

Hope can inspire both peaceful transformation and radical violence. It would be an oversight to say that the younger generations of the Shankill all share in one idealistic dream of the same better future. For some, a better future can represent something different altogether. Hage states that worrying for one's nation is a form of nationalism, which is a rising trend in the Western world, and *"has now become the dominant cultural form of expressing one's belonging to the nation"* (Hage, 2003, p. 22). This worrying for one's nation can be equated as an expression of hope. In the context of the Shankill this worry for their attachment to the UK is ever present, especially in times of Brexit and Sinn Féin's majority win in the most recent election (this took place after our fieldwork but was a fear that many of our interlocutors expressed). The connection to Britain and Britishness is a defining part of the Shankill residents' identity. The worry for the attachment to Britain manifests itself as hope in interesting ways. One example of this hope could be the violence at the interfaces at Lanark Way in Spring 2021 when young people rioted apparently as a result of the Brexit protocol (McDermott, 2021). Creary and Byrne argue that youth violence, such as these riots, can be understood as *"spoilers"* who are those that act in a way to undermine the peace process as they feel their rights and identity are being threatened (Creary & Byrne, 2014, p. 230). These outbursts of violence are *"sporadic, localized, and not accompanied by any expressions of political intent"* (Creary & Byrne, 2014, p. 231). Youth rioting could then also be understood as a regression to the old days of violence during The Troubles, when combatants felt they were protecting their area, their rights, and their identity. Carl said this about the riots on Lanark Way:

> *"I suppose you got younger people who feel they missed out in the conflict… and why would anyone feel they missed out in the conflict? I have no idea. But you know, this romanticism about the conflict and people in honour... But... I can tell you... and I was*

going to school with bombs going off… coming home at nights leaving a girlfriend's home and you had to run. You didn't stop at the houses with drive-by shootings, and I'm going to assume somebody tells these people that type of stuff... And it's just what they read in a book. Somebody's idealism of what happened during the Troubles, so it wasn't like that… it wasn't a good time." (Carl, ACT, 2022, [00:08:54)].

Carl, a member of the older generation, views the actions of the young people at Lanark Way with disdain as did many other of our interlocutors. However, this rioting can be seen as a form of hope. Hope in this form is a manifestation of discontent with the current situation so the youth are taking matters into their own hands. Instead of waiting for something to happen or change they take action. This counteracts Turner's patient conceptualisation of hope: these young people are not passive in their expression of hope for the future, they are not *"waiting for miracles"* (Turner, 2015, p. 176). Hage argues that when a threat is present, caring for one's society can easily morph into worrying and that *"worrying today exerts a form of symbolic violence over the field of national belonging. It eradicates the very possibility of thinking of an alternative mode of belonging"* (Hage, 2003, p. 23). In this case the threat exists as a threat to the Loyalist identity and to the Union with the UK, posed by a compromising Brexit situation and the mere existence of the Republicans and Nationalists. If hope in this context can be understood as youth hoping for a cause or for their connection to a cause, which is so formative to their identity such as Loyalism, then it can be argued that this hope is expressed by violent outbursts in order to reignite the fire of Loyalist violent action to protect an identity and a community.

6.3.8 Sub-Conclusion

"It's that whole mentality of growing up in The Troubles and stuff like that. And the longer that's clung on to... This is a debate that everybody fucking goes nuts for, but it's you can't not remember the past, of course. And that's part of the history, and that's why people come here and to remember the past. But you can't make it dictate the future as well. So it's always about right: How do we respectfully remember the past and don't offend anyone? Respect the survivors, respect people who've been through it who are impacted by The Troubles, of course, but what can we do for the future, so it doesn't turn into the past again?" (Maggie, NBAP, 2022, [00:40:00])

The future of the younger generations of the Shankill is certainly uncertain; hope thrives in this uncertainty and deprivation as actors are motivated to express their hope as action for change in their community. The Shankill, as a defining part of many resident's identities, distributes hope among its members in order to care for it and change it in a way that they feel is better. This hope may exist as worry, care, or fear and be manifested in various and conflicting ways by the Shankill residents, such as attempting to shape the future as different to the past by controlling what the youth know about the past, by engaging in cross-community work, to engaging in violent action to protect the community and its identity. The visions that the residents of the Shankill have for the community's future vary considerably but it is evident that hope does manifest itself as action and the will for change in many different forms.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis we set out to explore how the surrounding environment, traumas and hope shape the Loyalist working-class area of the Shankill. To investigate these questions we conducted fieldwork in the Shankill during February and March 2022. During this time, we conducted multiple interviews and focus groups with residents of the Shankill, both members of

transformation organisations, women's groups, and "common people" in the pubs on the Shankill Road. We spent time within the community, and at the interfaces and along the Peace Walls separating the Loyalist Shankill and the Republican Falls Road and had informal conversations with locals.

In the first chapter of the analysis, the material and spatial environment of the Shankill was investigated, to delve into how segregation, the Peace Walls, and the current condition of the Shankill affected the community. It was argued that our interlocutors showed a high identification level with the community. This did not lead to a positive evaluation of the environment as expected (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2012), as they found the Shankill dirty and 'left to rot'. Rather, they showed motivation to clean up the area to make it more appealing. It has been argued that this motivation was strong, exactly because of the importance of the area to our interlocutor. They did not receive any positive distinction from the outgroup based on their place identity, rather it led to stigmatisation of the Shankill identity. Cleaning up the area would make the prestige of the Shankill higher, which would in turn lead to a positive distinction regarding being from the Shankill. The Peace Walls were described as both a comfort blanket while, at the same time, the interfaces where the walls are present were described as uncomfortable and a hazardous area. It was argued that this conflicting view helped alleviate fear of violence: the walls make violence less likely, and the fear made our interlocutors attempt to avoid the interfaces and the 'other' side of the walls, to minimise the potential risk of violence. The inner parts of the Shankill were described as a safe area, where people helped each other. The spatial division of the Shankill into 'safe sanctuary' and 'dangerous interface' areas help to channel the violence into specific patterns and areas: it happens in the interfaces which make the internal parts seem safer. The interfaces were the 'battleground' for both sides, the background for violence, which helped the residents of the

Shankill live in relative peace, because they could steer away from the interfaces, and thereby make incidents of violence less likely. This led to further segregation and less contact between the Falls and Shankill communities. It has been argued that the political murals in the Shankill work on several levels. On one level, framing the Republican side as terrorists legitimises the violence from the Loyalist paramilitary groups in defending the community. On another level, the references to past struggles place the Loyalists in a larger narrative of freedom fighters defending civilians and promoting unity internally in the Shankill. The murals work as an identity resource for the Loyalists, and the references to the earlier Shankill residents that fought for freedom imply a continuity that promotes social unity and intergroup differentiation. The narrative of the Republican side was seen as 'nonsense' by our interlocutors, which justifies the murals' need to present a 'correct' narrative and legitimises violence and the need for paramilitary defenders.

In analysis Chapter 2 we have shown how post-conflict communities are affected by time. The community of the Shankill Road is shaped by generational interaction. Through the lenses of Karl Mannheim's generation theory, we have argued that the community can be divided into two main generational cohorts that are constituted by historical events of their time: the older generation are formed by the collective experience of terror and armed conflict during The Troubles. The younger generation is instead shaped by the post-conflict period of reconciliation, reparation, and transformation into a more sustainable society of peace times. The trauma left in the older generation from The Troubles is still very much defining for the Shankill's identity. First-hand memories of bombings and murders of innocents situates this generation in a temporal back-lock, where the past becomes near to impossible to overcome. The trauma therefore becomes a strong driving force in the polarisation of Belfast's district communities and seems to especially encapsulate the Shankill's shared narrative of suffering,

forming its identifying narrative. This is for example seen in our older interlocutors' personification of the past, in which memories of paramilitaries and war-time establishes a nostalgic longing for the old days during The Troubles, as the past represents historical events that function as the foundation of the Shankill's collective identity of past suffering.

Looking at the younger generation being born in the few years before and after the official ceasefire of 1998, the presence of social deprivation, lack of education and work, combined with the above collective trauma of the older generation, sets the historical frame in which the young generation takes form. We have argued that the trauma of conflict spills over into the young generation, as the community's young men especially engage in crime and antisocial behaviour in a strive for power and authority. The paramilitary groups that roamed the Shankill during the conflict have turned into criminal splinter groups. These groups are still maintaining the strong political narrative that legitimised their existence as peacekeepers during The Troubles. The Shankill's narrative of suffering is still so strong within the community, that the trauma of the past spills from the older generation's first-hand experience of conflict into the younger generation. Paramilitary activity becomes a media where young people can relive their parents' and grandparents' past, adding essence to the young people's lives, as they reignite the political struggle that the community's past members have killed and died for. The older generation's trauma of the past thereby becomes the younger generation's trauma of the present.

Chapter 3 of the analysis investigates why hope is present on the Shankill Road and how it is manifested. This chapter primarily focuses on the younger generation of the Shankill and how their future is hoped for by themselves and by others. Hage and Turner's definitions of hope guide this analysis in order to decipher the ways in which hope can exist and turn into a driving

force towards the future. Hope is exercised by the individual and the community and is expressed in different ways by different actors. We argue that the Shankill can be seen as a 'caring society', in line with Hage's conceptualisation, and that this motivates its members to care for it and worry about it. Hope cannot exist without fear, worry, and care; thus we see members of the community take action. The older generation takes such actions as attempting to narrow the continuation of the narrative of The Troubles, or by engaging in cross-community work. Other examples show inactivity in hope, which Turner defines as 'waiting and hoping' for change to come. This is visible as the older generation wish for a future for the younger generation that is not specific in any way but just different to their own: this is an expression of hope. We also discover that hope thrives in uncertainty and in deprivation which is manifested in different ways on the Shankill and we see the examples of youth work, involvement in cross-community projects, and the prevalence of grassroots organisations. Hope is not the same vision of the future for each individual, so we can also understand it to be manifested through violence as youth are active in this discontent for the present and the possible want for a time when the Loyalist cause was fought for in their community.

Despite the adverse social and economic circumstances of the Shankill and the apparent hopelessness that was expressed by our interlocutors, it is important to not only see hope as a positive emotion that breeds in positive circumstances towards a positive future, but it should be considered that without the many problems that the youth of the Shankill face in this liminal period, post-conflict and pre-peace, hope would not prosper. Without negative surroundings the will and driving force for change, in whatever form that may manifest, would not exist so strongly.

Our problem statement "*How is the Shankill community shaped by its surrounding environment in the wake of The Troubles?*" opened up the material surroundings alongside the temporal notion of past, present, and future of the Shankill community for investigation. The Shankill is shaped by its material surroundings through the Peace Walls and political murals that enhance segregation by outgroup differentiation and attempts to maximise internal cohesion and unity. This leads to a strong group identity that thrives on framing the Shankill as a united neighbourhood which is defending their heritage and culture under attack from several fronts. Intergenerational conflicts splinter this unity by the older and younger generation having different narratives, claims, and needs. The older generation are formed by the experiences during The Troubles, while the younger generation is instead shaped by the post-conflict period of reconciliation, reparation, and transformation along with social deprivation and lack of jobs and education. The trauma, still present from The Troubles, is spilling over into the younger generations which, we argue, lead to crime and antisocial behaviour amongst young men, which clashes with the strong Shankill group identity. Despite conflict internally in the Shankill and with the outgroups alongside social deprivation, lack of education and jobs, hope still exists and is enacted in the younger generation. Hope is enacted in several different ways ranging from work in community groups, activism, and rioting. Hope is universal within the Shankill community from what we found during our research, but the ways in which people hope, such as worrying, caring, or fearing are different. This also means that the actions which hope inspires will not be akin to each other: as what people hope for and what they have experienced differs from each other their actions to achieve what they imagine the future should look like will also be different.

In short, the Shankill community is formed by physical and psychological remnants of its past as it struggles to deal with these issues in adverse circumstances in order to create its future.

Combining all our analytical findings from our ethnographic work on the Shankill, we find evidence to argue that this post-conflict community is not only closely tied to the past conflict of The Troubles, but in many ways can be understood as a direct result of the conflict. Through visual material and a strong shared narrative, the spoils of The Troubles are still very much felt in the Shankill community and further re-enacted because of segregation. The presence of the conflict can be perceived as ambivalent, where on one hand, it binds the community together in a strong sense of belonging, that further breeds a strong community spirit on the Shankill, where the locals rely on each other over authorities and have a communal hope for the Shankill's future. On the other hand, the constant presence of The Troubles also becomes a collective trauma in the community, situating the community as locked in its own past, making the political and social remnants of conflict obstacles blocking the way for the Shankill's transformation towards a more stable society and motivating its residents' hopes and actions to stop history repeating itself. We can conclude that post-conflict urban communities, such as the Shankill, are in dire need of financial and social investment, alongside active focus on social justification, equality, and welfare. These parts are all vital factors that future post-conflict researchers should bear in mind, if we are to contribute to the most effective and strong transformation of post-conflict communities.

8. Literature

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